THE INFLUENCE OF THE BLACK CHURCH IN ESTABLISHING INITIATIVES AND COLLABORATIONS AIMED AT ENHANCING THE SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT OF BLACK STUDENTS

By

A. BYRON COLEMAN III

A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FOR BLACK CHURCHES

Submitted to New York Theological Seminary
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

New York, NY, USA

2024

ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF THE BLACK CHURCH IN ESTABLISHING INITIATIVES AND COLLABORATIONS AIMED AT ENHANCING THE SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT OF BLACK STUDENTS

By

A. BYRON COLEMAN III

This research explores ways in which the Black Church can establish initiatives and collaborations to enhance the academic achievements of Black students. In a more detailed context, how can the Black Church leverage its resources and connections to develop programs and partnerships to address the social justice issue of educational disparities, mainly focusing on the lower academic performance of Black students?

To investigate this question, a study was conducted interviewing six individuals who provided insight on the topic of the Black Church and education, specifically the influence the Black church can have by using the Excellence through Exposure program to assist in increasing the academic performance of Black students. (This program was held in the Spring/Summer of 2023 and consisted of 40 Black students from different schools throughout Oklahoma City at the Fifth Street Baptist Church in Oklahoma City.) These individuals come from a wide range of professions, yet they all grew up and still attend predominantly Black churches. Based on their professional and personal knowledge of the Black church, they answered specific questions regarding the Black church, education, and the Excellence through Exposure Program. Results from all interviews were mixed, with most participants agreeing that the Black church plays a pivotal role in the lives of Black students. Each respondent expressed that the Black church, through mentoring, representation, cultural connection, and value sharing, can assist Black students in improving their academic performance. The inquiries focused not only on their

opinions about the Excellence through Exposure Program but also on whether additional elements should be incorporated into the curriculum and the practical steps for implementing such changes in Black churches. The collected data indicated that active engagement of the Black church in the lives of Black students correlates with an enhancement in their academic performance. The final chapter presents recommendations on how policymakers and denominational leaders can address this issue of Black students' low academic performance. The persons interviewed for this research are Rev. Dawn Bowles, Rev. Dr. Lee Cooper, Dr. Sharri Coleman, Mr. Jay Watley, Rev. Keith Jossell, and Mrs. Paulette Hunnicutt.

Dedication Placeholder

Acknowledgements Placeholder

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background....1
Research Question....1
Theological and Biblical Context....1
Theoretical Framework....2
Contextual Self-Reflection to the Study....5
Statement of Using the Term "Black"....9
The Black Church and Education....9
Introduction....12
History of the Black Church and Education Education....14
Analysis of the Problem....19
National Statistics....20
State of Oklahoma Education Statistics....22
Cultural Disconnect....23
Definition of Major Terms....28
Dissertation Structure....29

Chapter 2: Activist Leader (Pastor Michael Waldrond)....32
Interview #1....32
Interview #2....33
History of First Corinthian Baptist Church....47
First Corinthian Baptist Church Identity Statement....49

Chapter 3: Ministerial Competencies....50
Preaching....50
Prophetic Preaching....51
Preaching Education as a Social Justice Issue....55
Pastor....56
Pastoring Marginalized Communities....59
Change Agent....60

Chapter 4 Methodology....68
Methods....69
Participants....70

Data 70
Methodological Limitations 71
Interview Questions 72
Plan of Implementation 73

Chapter 5: Findings and Interviews 80
Question #1 81
Question #2 84
Question #3 88
Question #4 93
Excellence through Exposure II 98
Parent Self-Assessment Survey 100
Student Self-Assessment Survey 101
Excellence through Exposure I 102
Iterations of Excellence through Exposure II 103
Excellence through Exposure II Commitment Contract 104

Chapter 6: Summary & Critiques of the Study 106
Overall Findings 112
Contributions to the Field 114
The Black Church 114
Church Leadership 116
Separation of Church and State 116
No Other Ethnic Group Studied 117
Urban vs. Suburban Black Students 117
Suspensions and Expulsions 118
Over Emphasis on Sports and Black Students 118
Special Education 119
Future Action Plans 120
Black Churches 120
Non-Profit Organizations 121
Policymakers 122
Black Denominational Leaders 123
Neighborhood Associations 124
Bibliography 125

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Research Question

How can the Black Church create programs and partnerships to help increase the academic performance of Black students in school? More specifically, can the Black church use its resources and values and create a program to address the social justice issue of the disparity within the educational system of the low academic performance of Black students?

This research asks the question, how can the Black Church create programs and partnerships to help increase the academic performance of Black students in school? More specifically, can the Black church use its resources and relationships and develop programs/partnerships to address the social justice issue of the disparity of the low academic performance of Black students within the educational system?

Theological and Biblical Context

Although the word "education" is not explicitly used in the bible, it has often been interchanged with the word "wisdom." The word "wisdom" is used over 229 times in the bible. Consistently throughout the bible one will discover scriptures that support and promote obtaining "wisdom"; fearing God as the beginning of knowledge (Ecclesiastes 7:12), training up a child with wisdom (Proverbs 22:6, Ephesian 6:4, Isaiah 54:13), choosing wisdom over wealth (Proverbs 3:16-26, Proverbs 16:16, Proverbs 21:20 teaching history to the next generation (Judges 2.10, Deuteronomy 32.7, Joshua 4.21-22, Psalm 78.6, Deuteronomy 11:19) pursuing wisdom (James 1:5).

The New Testament records that Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and the favor of God." Luke 2:52 Paul, often considered the most influential apostle of Jesus, was educated as he could read and write and engage in rhetorical conversation. Acts 22:3 records Paul himself saying, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel 1 according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day."

In an article entitled "God's Wisdom: Toward a Theology of Education," the author quotes Peter G. Hodgson, the Charles G. Finney Professor of Theology at Vanderbilt Divinity School, who says, "All education is essentially religious because it aims at the transformation of human beings." Properly understood, education is the movement, in Hodgson's words, "from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness." The article conveys that Hodgson believes true "transformative education rests on goodness, power, and wisdom in us." From a theological perspective, the Black church's influence on its members' lives has been undeniably transformative. So, when one looks at the history of the Black church and education, it can be seen that education was not just about obtaining knowledge but also about discovering intrinsic value, which is transformative.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, Social Learning Theory is proposed as the theoretical frame to explain further the impact the Black church can have on increasing the academic performance of Black students. The severe disparities within the public education system, which have negatively impacted the performance of Black children over many years, are evidence that the Black

church's resources, presence, and values are needed to help improve the academic outcomes of Black students. Social Learning Theory, which Albert Bandura created, proposes that

> *"emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior."*[1]

Bandura's theory proposes that people can achieve often based on imitating other people's behaviors. As stated in the theory, three basic ideas explain this;

1. *"When someone witnesses a 'model' performing a specific behavior, as well as the consequences of that behavior, they can commit the sequence of actions to memory and recall that data to guide their future behaviors.*

2. *People do not learn new behaviors simply by attempting them, and then succeeding or failing. Instead, they depend largely upon the imitation of action sequences by other people.*

3. *People choose to replicate or dismiss certain behaviors based on how they observe others being rewarded or punished for those behaviors, or the outcomes of those behaviors."* [2]

[1] McLeod, Saul, "Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory." Simply Psychology, Oct. 23, 2023. https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html

[2] TeachThought Staff, "Bandura's 4 Principles of Social Learning." TeachThought, Jan.14, 2022. https://www.teachthought.com/learning/principles-of-social-learning-theory/

Furthermore, within Bandura's theory, there are four operating components: attention, retention, production, and motivation. The observer pays attention to certain behaviors. Depending on their accessibility, they observe the model's mannerisms, values, attitudes, and behavior. Once the observer has seen how the model reacts, responds, and behaves in different situations, they retain that information for future use. They also learn the rewards and consequences of certain behaviors and attitudes through retention. The observer then repeats the behavior they have witnessed and receives positive feedback models. With that information, the observer can shift their behavior and actions to suit their needs in future contexts. Once there are positive responses toward the observer's behaviors and actions motivate them to repeat these actions for a preferable future.

When this theory is applied within the Black Church, it can significantly assist in improving the academic outcomes of Black students by the models that exist amongst the church's members, ministers, and ministry workers. The impact of religious support on young people cannot be underestimated.

> *"Religious social support is conceptualized as a promotive factor because it is a significant and likely asset associated with faith communities. Positive impacts of religious social support on mental and emotional outcomes include fewer depressive symptoms and lower levels of psychological distress."* [3]

[3] Hope, Meredith O., Shervin Assari, Yasmin Cole-Lewis, & Cleopatra Howard Caldwell, "Religious Social Support, Discrimination, and Psychiatric Disorders Among Black Adolescents." Race and Social Problems, 9(2) June, 2017: 1-13.

Using Bandura's theory, the first process of attention occurs when the members of the Black Church show an interest in the Black students and display concern for their overall achievement. Many young people feel as if older adults don't care about their present or their future, so this step reverses that notion and shows the Black students the care and attention they need to progress positively. The second phase of retention would see Black students remembering as a result of their observation of the basics of what they observed due to the relationship they have created with church members. They would recall the lessons on hard work, completing assignments, positive attitude, and being respectful. At the production stage, the student and the Black church can measure the academic progress the student is making in school due to the influence of the relationship with the church.

Contextual Self-Reflection to the Study

My intellectual curiosity about education and the Black church led to this research project. Three significant events have taken place throughout my life that have shaped my views regarding the impact the Black church can have on improving the academic performance of Black children. The first pivotal event in my life was my parents' decision regarding what church they would attend. My parents wanted my sister and me to be a part of a church that not only emphasized Christian spirituality and biblical knowledge but also one that emphasized cultural awareness. They chose Cosmopolitan Community Church, which was led by Rev. Dr. Henry O. Hardy, who was a seminary-trained pastor who believed in his parishioners knowing and learning not only the bible but also Black history. The church hosted an afterschool program that offered tutoring and courses on Black history. During the calendar year, the church would sponsor trips for the students participating in the afterschool program to Black museums and

Black theater plays. Dr. Hardy preached and taught through the lens of a Black liberation theologian. He was on the Board of Directors for Operation Push, which the Rev. Jesse led. L. Jackson. He collaborated with the Nation of Islam on many community events and was good friends with the Honorable Louis Farrakhan. On one occasion, I had the extreme pleasure as a teenager to meet Louis Farrkahn at Cosmopolitan Church, and that, along with the aforementioned events, deeply affected and influenced my thoughts regarding educated clergy and community leaders.

Another transformational event that helped shape my perspective and led me to this research came from my church experience around the age of 14-18. My parents moved to the suburbs, meaning we would have to find another church to attend since the commute would be 45 minutes one way to attend our original home church. My family ended up connecting with the New Faith Baptist Church, which was located in Mattison, Illinois, a suburb right outside of Chicago. The church was led by Rev. Dr. Frank Thomas (who currently serves as the Director of the Compelling Preaching Initiative and the Nettie Sweeney and Hugh The. Miller Professor of Homiletics at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana.) Much like Dr. Hardy, Dr. Thomas emphasized spiritual and biblical awareness for his membership and cultural awareness. It was important to Dr. Thomas to create programs within the church that promoted higher education. He said obtaining a formal education was vital, especially for individuals who felt called to the ministry. Dr. Thomas introduced the church to educated and well-trained preachers and pastors.

It was during this time that I discovered the late Rev. Dr. Frederick G. Sampson, who served as the Senior Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, and the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright, who served as the Senior Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in

Chicago, Illinois. Being exposed to these highly educated and trained preaching giants as a teenager and the educational programs Dr. Thomas created out of New Faith Baptist Church influenced my perspective on the Black church's impact on young Black kids' lives. At New Faith, I was a part of the mentoring programs, the afterschool program, and the rites of passage program. When I shared with Dr. Thomas that I felt God had called me to ministry, he shared with me that my first calling "was not to preach, but to prepare," as he stated, "Being prepared will put you in places that only prepared can be." His encouragement influenced my decision, and lead to my third experience that inspired this research project.

My third experience that led me to research education as a social justice was my four years as a student at Morehouse College. Many reasons influenced my decision to attend Morehouse College, including Dr. King had graduated from Morehouse; it was the only all-male Black college in the nation; and the first Black mayor, Maynard Jackson, a childhood hero of mine, attended Morehouse. But one of the primary reasons I chose Morehouse was because I discovered that it was founded in the basement of a church. In the journal article by Mark Giles entitled "Howard Thurman, The Making of a Morehouse Man," he states,

> "Morehouse College, in particular, possesses a unique legacy in shaping Black men and Black male leaders. The original institution (Augusta Institute, established in the basement of a Black church, Springfield Baptist in Augusta, Georgia) that became Morehouse was founded in 1867 under the auspices and support of the Black community and the American Baptist Home Missionary Society (ABHMS). The legacy of Morehouse in developing positive contributors to their communities reveals a intellectual and cultural resistance to the entrenched negative stereotypes of Black men (i.e., Uncle, Sambo, Rastus, and

> Black Brute) and the widespread American narrative of Black men as dangerous, dumb, pathologically sexual, lazy, and immoral. The institution prides itself on taking Black males from various walks of life and transforming them into a Morehouse man." [4]

When I learned that there was an institution of higher education birthed with the specific purpose of equipping and educating Black men that was founded in a church basement, that impacted me enough to make me want to enroll in that institution. While at Morehouse I was exposed to not only the best and brightest professors and thinkers, but also through Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel which the incomparable Rev. Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter led. Under Dr. Carter's leadership, I discovered the impact the Black church has had historically around issues of social justice and the impact the Black preacher can have in the local and global community. While at Morehouse, I served as the President of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Chapel Assistants, which allowed me to host, listen, and be taught by educated and trained clergy from all over the country. My Morehouse experience and Dr. Carter's advice led me to attend a seminary in Philadelphia.

These experiences and some others influenced me to do my research on the topic of the Black Church and Education. My formative years growing up in Chicago, sitting under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Frank Thomas in Matteson, Illinois and the exposure I received at Morehouse College deeply resonated with me on the need for the Black church to return in part

[4] Giles, Mark S. "Howard Thurman, Black Spirituality, and Critical Race Theory in Higher Education." The Journal of Negro Education, 79(3), Summer, 2010: 354-365.

to its roots of being an institution that is involved in helping improve the education of Black students.

Using the Term "Black"

Concerning race, throughout this document, we will use the term Black to refer to people of the African Diaspora and to such populations that reside within the United States. To some, African Americans are a subgroup within the larger Black community. Since our discussion purposely includes those who may be first-generation immigrants or who, for whatever reason, do not identify as African American, we employ the term "Black." Furthermore, we capitalize it to distinguish the racial category and related identity from the color. Similarly, we capitalize the word White when referring to race.

The Black Church and Education

The Black Church has a long history of advocating for the education of Black people. From the time of the Freedman and Sabbath Schools to the creation of HBCUs's Historically Black Colleges and Universities to the present. Black churches have always advocated and created spaces for educating Black people. This study reveals that when the Black Church continues with that legacy today, it can aid in the academic progress of Black Students. This study sought to look at the performance of Black students locally in Oklahoma and discovered that overall, Black students consistently underperform academically in the specific areas of reading and math. This study was conducted by interviewing several individuals who have a relationship with the Black church and the public school system to ascertain their insight on what their thoughts are on the Black students in the education system and the Excellence through

Exposure Program. The questions centered on their thoughts regarding the Excellence through Exposure Program, whether any other elements should be added to the curriculum, and how this can be implemented in Black Churches. Also, how the Black Church uses this program and partners with local schools to address the issue of the low academic performance of Black Students. The Excellence through Exposure Program was conducted at the Fifth Street Baptist Church in Oklahoma City.

The program consisted of several components: 1.) Curriculum: there are four key components: Cultural, Spiritual, Economic, Career Readiness, and Academic. The goal of each of the components is to place teachers/presenters in front of each of the students and address the topic. An example is in the class Career Readiness, bring in a Black professional from the church/community, a doctor, lawyer, engineer, or entrepreneur, and have them present what they do professionally. Describe their position, why they chose that specific career, how much education is needed to reach that profession, etc. The goal based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory is that observation and modeling play a primary role in how and why people learn. 2.) Implementation: at this step, the Black Church creates a conversation with a local school to describe the program offered at the church and develop lines of communication with teachers, counselors, and administrators to set goals for students that are a part of the program. This program, sponsored by the church, exposes teachers to a community organization concerned about the overall academic achievement of Black students. The school's response is to recommend students that it believes would benefit from this program and create a consistent way for both the church and school to measure each student's progress. 3.) Participation: This program was held over the summer of 2023 over four weeks with approximately 40 students ranging from 5th to 12th grade. The local schools that were represented and a part of the

partnership were Western Heights School, Douglass High School, Millwood Elementary School, Harding Charter Prep, Thelma Parks Middle School, and Bell Isle Middle School. 4.) Interviews: Interviews were conducted with six individuals regarding the Excellence through Exposure Program to ascertain their thoughts on the program and partnerships and what additions should be made to the curriculum to help increase the academic achievement of Black Students.

Those interviewed thought the program and partnerships with local schools are very much needed, specifically in the urban centers. They also expressed that the local academic performance of Black students in school was the result of several key factors: lack of resources, outdated academic material, lack of connection between White teachers/administrators and Black students, and absence of social-emotional learning within the school curriculum. They each expressed different values that they believed exist within the Black Church that can aid in helping Black students increase their academic performance, such as hard work, discipline, commitment, and faith.

The individuals that were interviewed were, Rev. Dawn Bowles, Rev. Dr. Lee Cooper, Dr. Sharri Coleman, Mr. Jay Watley, Rev. Keith Jossell, Ms. Paulette Hunnicutt

There have been efforts over the years to address the issue of the low academic performance of Black students who attend public schools. Despite those efforts year after year, Black students continue to underperform their white counterparts. When the Black church creates partnerships with schools as well as creates culture-based programming Black children improve academically.

This paper will also show through interviews with parents, teachers, administrators, and students that when the Black church is involved in providing educational/learning opportunities

through the church, Black students improve academically. This chapter will also look at the national and local statistics of the academic performance of Black children.

Introduction

As of 2023 there are currently 512 public schools, 25 charter schools, about 207 private schools, 23,000 students homeschooled, and epic virtual instruction in every county. Black students by and large attend public schools. The two largest school districts in the state of Oklahoma are Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Both of these cities are also where the majority of Blacks reside. In spite of the end of racial segregation across the nation, in Oklahoma, school districts are still segregated. Black students attend majority Black schools in the Northeast quadrant of Oklahoma City and the same is true for Black students in Tulsa. In both Oklahoma and Tulsa, 67.3% of students are classified as economically disadvantaged. The statistics that I will share in this introduction will reveal that of the Black students who are underperforming, the majority come from these two school districts, Tulsa and Oklahoma City. It should also be noted that based on my experience, when individuals are relocated to Oklahoma City or Tulsa, they are routinely told that they should not send their children to those schools where the majority of the student body are Black students. The question is, "Did this problem just arise or is there a history that has produced the results that have been uncovered?" Oklahoma was admitted as a state in November, 1907 and the very first law that was passed was the law of legal segregation in December, 1907. This law was known as the coach law, which states that,

> *"Every railway company, urban or suburban car company, street car or interurban car or railway company . . . shall provide separate coaches or compartments as hereinafter provided for the accommodation of the white and*

negro races, which separate coaches or cars shall be equal in all points of comfort and convenience."[5]

When Oklahoma was admitted to the Union in 1907, its Constitution mandated the separation of Black children from all other races in the public school system. (Dowell v. School Bd. of Oklahoma City Public Schools.) In addition to laws enforcing segregation in the schools, racially restrictive covenants, supported by state and local law, established a segregated residential pattern in Oklahoma City. (677 F. Supp. 1503, 1506 (WD Okla. 1987).) Petitioner Board of Education of Oklahoma City exploited this residential segregation to enforce school segregation, locating "all-Negro" schools in the heart of the City's northeast quadrant, in which the majority of the City's Afro-American citizens resided. Even after Brown vs. Board of Education desegregated public schools across the nation, Oklahoma schools and communities remained very much segregated.[6]

After several court cases challenging segregated schools, the goal of school integration within Oklahoma City was met at least in theory. In the 70s, 80s, and 90s the majority of Blacks still attended schools in the Northeast quadrant of Oklahoma City. Black students attending an all-Black school was not and is not the problem. The problem arises when schools are looking for appropriate funding, adequate resources, to date books to help their students academically succeed, the majority of Black schools are left behind because of the zipcode the school is located in. The academic underperformance of Black students in school is not a result of the schools they attend, but largely because those schools lack the proper funding to provide the

[5] Mitchell, Roland W., "Commentary: The African American Church, Education and Self Determination." The Journal of Negro Education, vol. 79, no. 3, 2010, 202–04. JSTOR.

[6] https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/89-1080.ZD.html

services that are offered in the majority White schools. A recent report indicated that out of the nine worst schools in Oklahoma City, four are located in the Northeast Quadrant of Oklahoma City and have a majority Black student body. Factors such as class size and instructor credentials were considered for this ranking, but some of the worst schools in Oklahoma City are poorly rated due to student performance and academic progress.[7]

History of the Black Church and Education

Schools and Community organizations have a long history of partnering to help Black students succeed academically within public schools. Mentoring programs, after-school tutorial programs, summer STEM camps, and many other programs have always existed in urban communities. School partnerships have been a consistent tool to strengthen Black student achievement. These partnerships are often created out of necessity because public schools suffer from a lack of resources. Not only do schools have limited resources, but many of the Black students attending these schools also have limited resources. Partnerships between organizations and schools have sought to fill the gap that exists for Black students and provide the necessary intervention for them. Church and school partnerships can be one type of partnership that provides a distinctive opportunity to increase academic achievement. Two scriptures are found that can support the theological basis on why the Black Church should provide educational intervention for Black students. 1) Deuteronomy 11:19 NKJV: *"You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.* 2) Proverbs 22:6 NKJV: *"Train up a child in the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not depart from it."* These scriptures

[7] Williams, Amy, "The Nine Worst Schools in Oklahoma City Today." Moms Who Think, Aug. 15, 2023. https://www.momswhothink.com/the-worst-schools-in-oklahoma-city-today

can serve as the foundation for Black Churches to create and establish partnerships with public schools and create programs to support the academic achievement of Black students.

The Black Church has a long legacy of being an institution that has addressed the needs of Black people. It has historically been the central place where social, political, economic, physical, and spiritual needs were met. As a result of the messages of white supremacy and Black inferiority that were constantly being preached during the time of slavery, the need for an organism (which would later become an institution) that would speak to and aid in empowering enslaved marginalized people arose. The Black Church was birthed according to what Albert J. Raboteau calls the "hush harbor," which became the place where Black people would not only receive spiritual uplift but it would also become the place where they learned to read and write. Many states were notorious for passing laws that forbade enslaved people from learning to read or write. Between 1740 and 1834, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Virginia all passed anti-literacy laws. The law made it punishable by imprisonment or death for an enslaved person to learn to read or write, and it also applied if someone taught reading or writing. The state of Virginia passed a law during this time that stated,

> *"[E]very assemblage of negroes for instruction in reading or writing, or in the night time for any purpose, shall be an unlawful assembly. Any justice may issue his warrant to any office or other person, requiring him to enter any place where such assemblage may be, and seize any negro therein; and he, or any other justice, may order such negro to be punished with stripes."* [8]

[8] "Offences against public policy," Title 54, Chapter 198; "Assembling of negroes. Trading by free negroes," Section 31; in The Code of Virginia. Richmond: William F. Ritchie. 1849, 747. Retrieved February 10, 2017.

These and other laws were created specifically to keep enslaved Black people from even considering themselves capable of achieving equality or freedom. Although some advocated for enslaved persons to learn to read and write, those were simply attempts to direct the enslaved to scriptures that spoke of being obedient and subservient to their slave masters. The Black Church was formed not only as a means of comfort and solace from the brutality inflicted on enslaved persons but also as an institution of resistance that gave Black people dignity, personhood, and agency. C. Eric Lincoln wrote of the sole power of the Black Church: "The Black Church created its own literature, established its own publishing houses, elected its own bishops and other administrators, founded its own colleges and seminaries, and developed its own unique style of worship." [9]

The Black Church, amongst all of its achievements, the one achievement that must be highlighted is its understanding of the importance of education. Its insistence on creating and developing ways for Blacks to be educated is a significant achievement within the Black Church experience. Many Black churches and Black pastors understood that if Black people were going to improve their social-economic standing in this country, they had to be educated. Of course, the word "educated" is broad and general, but what was understood by many during enslavement and during the time of reconstruction was that education should be a central goal for Black persons seeking not only physical freedom but also spiritual and intellectual freedom.

Many newly freed Blacks also viewed education as a means to gain equality in a society that for decades treated them as chattel. As a result of this, many Black churches would take their sacred places that were used for Sunday morning worship and transform them into classrooms on weekdays. The same place that was used on Sunday for worship, where the people would gather

[9] Lincoln, C. Eric, "The Power in the Black Church." *CrossCurrents*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1974, 3–21. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24457876. Accessed Aug. 16, 2023.

and lift up the name of God through worship as well as have their spirits fed by the preaching of the gospel, would be transformed on Monday into classrooms where individuals of all ages would gather to, in the words of Dr. Henry Louis Gates, "catch a lesson." This was significant for many Black churches, as one author points out because,

> *"the very foundation of freedom for enslaved Africans in the U. S. was a dogged faith in a higher power that was sympathetic to her/his unjustly treated people, combined with an unyielding pursuit of freedom through education to improve their material circumstance."* [10]

An example of this is found in Sharpsburg, Md. where a small church called Tolson's Chapel which was built in 1866 by Black Methodists just two years after slavery ended in Maryland in 1864. This church was the central place where Black people educated themselves and their children. Tolson's Chapel served as both church and school between 1866-1899. This is one example of the importance of education during the Reconstruction era for the Black Church.[11]

Another example is the Sabbath schools that were created during Reconstruction. "Sabbath schools sprang up across the South during and after the Civil War and in effect are the early forebears of Black educational and spiritual self-determination and uplift. Numbering more than 1000 and primarily established and run by and for formerly enslaved Blacks, these church-

[10] Mitchell, Roland W., "Commentary: The African American Church, Education and Self Determination." The Journal of Negro Education, vol. 79, no. 3, 2010. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20798342. Accessed 16 Aug. 16, 2023. 202–04.

[11] National Park Service, "African American and Education During Reconstruction: The Tolson's Chapel Schools." https://www.nps.gov/articles/african-americans-and-education-during-reconstruction-the-tolson-s-chapel-schools.htm

sponsored schools functioned in the evenings and on weekends and provided basic literacy and religious instruction to those who were unable to attend." [12]

Freedman schools were also birthed during this particular time, to educate formerly enslaved persons. Freedman schools were created in churches and on military bases, staffed by White Northerners and freed Blacks who were able to read and write.

To further show the importance of education to the Black Church, post-Civil War, numerous Historic Black Denominations founded HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities). Some examples are Allen University established in South Carolina in 1870 by the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), Lane College founded in Tennessee in 1882 by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (CME), and Livingstone College established in North Carolina by the African Methodist in 1879.

Sabbath Schools and Freedman Schools were not the only places where Blacks received an education. The one place that still exists in many churches today is Sunday School. For many Black Churches, Sunday School has been the primary place where Black students (who were also parishioners) are taught by Black teachers and receive any type of cultural lesson along with a biblical lesson. Noted historian E. Franklin Frazier wrote, "the first real educators to take up the work of enlightening American Negroes were clergymen interested in the propagation of the gospel."[13] The Black Preacher as well as those Blacks who were literate took it upon themselves to teach biblical lessons to congregants while teaching them how to read and write. "Sunday schools were often the first places where Black people made contact with the educational process, first hearing, then memorizing, and finally, learning to read Bible stories"[14] This was

[12] Mitchell, "Commentary: The African American Church," 202–4.
[13] Frazier, E. F., *The Negro Church in America*. New York: Shocken Books, 1974, 42.
[14] Lincoln, C. Eric, and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990, 251.

liberation for so many within the Black community to be in a space around others who were like themselves, and all were striving to improve their lot in life. Sunday Schools was significant for so many who for years had been taught by Whites that they should not seek to improve themselves, but rather stay dependent on White benevolence. Lincoln and Mamiya state that Sunday Schools eventually shifted into day schools and then became HBCUs. They state in their work that,

> *"The Black Church furnished the opportunity for this experience and the people…learned how to discriminate, how to think for themselves, how to take care of themselves in a critical situation, in short, how to be self-sufficient". In this way, the Church provided educational resources, at both professional and cultural levels, for Black Christian communities across age cohorts."* [15]

Analysis of the Problem

Despite the heroic efforts of teachers in the public school systems across this country, Black children are consistently underperforming in school. In certain urban areas Black children perform two times below the state and national average.

> "There is an increased need however for improvement regarding the educational achievement of African American students in K-12, public school settings. Ever since the times of slavery, the Black church has had an educational function in the lives of African Americans and at times, has served to increase their motivation and self-esteem. There has been ample research conducted involving the Black Church and its functional role in

[15] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 157.

> the education of African American students, however, there is an increased need to locate and understand how Black Church partnerships (and programs) specifically with schools in high-poverty neighborhoods work to support the educational achievement of African American students." [16]

Both the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 and the Race to the Top Act in 2009 were laws passed with the overall goal to increase academic achievement for all students regardless of race or socio-economic background. These were bi-partisan laws that were designed to address the consistent underperformance of children throughout the public school system in the country.

The sad reality is that despite these bills being passed, and the funding being allocated to public schools, Black students in high-poverty communities are still performing well below their Caucasian counterparts. Statistics reveal that in a significant number of states, Black students who are from high-poverty communities underperform academically. First, we must look at the national statistics on how Black students who attend public schools are performing academically and then shift to the local context within the state of Oklahoma.

National Statistics

According to research conducted by the National School Boards Association the statistics reveal a significant problem among Black students. Among Black students without home internet access, 39% said that it was because internet was too expensive, suggesting that their families could not afford it. This percentage for Black students was much higher than that for White

[16] McIntosh, Reubin L., "From the Sanctuary to the Classroom: The Role of Black Church Partnerships in Supporting the Educational Achievement for African American Students." OSU Dissertation (11222) 2018. https://shareok.org/handle/11244/317663

students. In the fall of 2017, of the 50.7 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, 7.7 million were Black. Only 7% of Black students attended low-poverty schools, compared with 39% Asian and 31% White students. 45% of Black students attended high-poverty schools, compared with 8% of White students.

> "The National Report Card (NAEP) shows that from 1992 through 2019, the average reading and math scores for Black 4th, 8th, and 12th graders had always been lower than those of their White peers.
>
> Only 9 out of 100 Black students performed at or above the NAEP proficient level in civics.
>
> Only 13 out of 100 Black students performed at or above the NAEP proficient level in math.
>
> Only 15 out of 100 Black students performed at or above the NAEP proficient level in reading."[17]

These are a few examples of a national trend that should be acknowledged. For many years, Black students have consistently been underperforming in the public education system. Although Black students make up a significant portion of the public education system, when it comes to the subjects of civics, math, and reading, their academic performance is significantly lower than Caucasian and Asian students. I list national statistics because when we look at the local context, specifically the state of Oklahoma, the numbers reveal the same problem:

[17] National School Board Association, "Black Students in The Condition of Education 2020." May 2020. https://www.nsba.org/-/media/NSBA/File/CPE-Black-Students-2020-Report-FINAL.pdf

State of Oklahoma Education Statistics

According to National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test data for the 2019-2020 school year, the most recent available due to COVID disruptions, academic outcomes are low for all groups in Oklahoma, but are even worse for many Black students.

82% of Black 4th-grade students in Oklahoma were below grade level in math in the 2019-2020 school year. Just 17% scored at grade level ("proficient") and 1% were above grade level ("advanced").

In comparison, 58% of White students were below grade level.

In 4th grade English, NAEP found that 87% of Black students in Oklahoma scored below grade level while 12% were at grade level and 1% were above grade level.
Among white students, 65% were below grade level while 29% performed at grade level, and 6% were advanced.[18]

As the statistics reveal, Black students who attend public schools nationwide and locally in Oklahoma have similar numbers when it comes to academic performance. Black students are consistently falling behind despite the federal, state, and local government efforts to increase academic achievement. Federal and state funding to inner city public schools is an important factor in assuring each student, regardless of race, class, gender, or economic background, is given every opportunity to succeed, but in many cases, because of the politicization of the educational system, this does not take place. Access to resources, parental involvement and a host of others factors also contribute to a child's success in school. Some programs have been created to address the academic gap between Black students and their peers, such as Head Start

[18] Carter, Ray, "Hofmeister: Oklahoma Schools Failing Black Student." Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Sept. 16, 2021. https://ocpathink.org/post/independent-journalism/hofmeister-oklahoma-schools-failing-black-students

and Gear Up. However, there is still a need for supplemental programs that can be created by the Black Church and partnerships that can be created to help Black students. In my research I discovered that along with the aforementioned factors, other factors contribute to Black students underperformance in school, where the Black Church can play a pivotal role:

1. Lack of Cultural Connection
2. Lack of exposure to Black Professionals in the respective vocations

Cultural Disconnect

Many Black students are underperforming in school because of a significant cultural disconnect between teachers, administrators and other staff members. Studies show that Black students underperform when there is not any attempt to culturally connect with them. One author posits,

> "American educators seem intent and content on merely treating African American children as though they not have a unique journey and are in need of unique intervention Instead, educators seem resolute in their determination to simply attempt to transmit Euro-American culture to all children. Many African American children seem to resent and resist this process of acculturation and thereby, many are "failing" in discouraging numbers." [19]

When the school system does not value or appreciate the difference between the majority culture and the minority culture, Black students feel abandoned. This abandonment is one root cause of low academic performance. Many Black students throughout the state of Oklahoma

[19] Davis, Patrick, "The Origins of African American Culture and Its Significance in African American Student Academic Success." *Journal of Thought* 40, no. 1 (2005), 43–59. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42589812.

attend schools where they are taught from a Eurocentric curriculum that lifts whiteness as the standard. Noted scholar Molefi Kete Asante noted, "that as educational institutions attempt to carry out their mission of cultural transmission, Black students become further removed from their African culture, and thereby, even further removed from themselves."

When students are disconnected from their culture, identity, and overall agency, they inevitably fall behind academically. In one of my interviews in the research part of this project, I asked students if they feel they have a cultural connection with the teacher/principal or administrator in their school. The reply was, "No." The majority expressed that they were disconnected from their teacher because he/she "does not know anything about us or our culture." This reply was common in my research. Many Black students said they don't learn anything about Black history or Black culture, and that nobody in a position of authority is making any attempt to relate or connect with them. When Black students are exposed to their culture, it lifts their self-esteem and empowers their agency. Learning about yourself and where you come from gives Black children an opportunity to control how they see themselves and how they choose to be seen. The public school system, nationally and within my local context, does not afford this opportunity.

According to the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies, students in Kindergarten to 3rd Grade are taught nothing regarding Black History. Students in 4th grade to 8th grade are taught only six subjects relating to Black History. The students are taught about two Black Oklahomans (American cowman Bill Pickett and Civil Rights leader Clara Luper) and the

transatlantic slave trade, the 3/5th Compromise, the Underground Railroad, Black Codes, and the Civil Rights Movement. [20]

Black students show academic improvements when they learn about their history and culture from people who understand the importance of learning that information.

Another example of this cultural disconnect is found in research done by the National Center for Education Statistics, which reveal that 68.8% of public school teachers are White, compared to less than 10% of Black. [21] This is not to say that White teachers are incapable of teaching Black children, but what statistics reveal is that when a Black student has a Black teacher, either male or female, they perform better academically. Andre M. Perry researched the impact and influence a Black teacher has on a Black student and it revealed,

> *"that having a Black teacher, in particular, does a lot of good for students, especially minority students. Black students who have one Black teacher by third grade are 7% more likely to graduate high school and 13% more likely to enroll in college. After having two Black teachers, Black students' likelihood of enrolling in college increases by 32%.*. [22]

White teachers often misinterpret much of Black culture, dialectic, mannerisms, and overall behavior as deviant or aggressive behavior. This misinterpretation does not aid in the overall goal of academic success of Black students. Most Black students comes from a Black

[20] Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies. https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Oklahoma%20Academic%20Standards%20for%20Social%20Studies%205.21.19.pdf

[21] https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr/public-school-teachers

[22] Perry, Andre M., "For Better Student Outcomes, Hire More Black Teachers." The Hechinger Report, Oct 15, 2019. https://hechingerreport.org/for-better-student-outcomes-hire-more-black-teachers/

home and go to a school in a Black neighborhood, but when they enter the school they are met by a White principal, White teacher, and White school counselor. If that child's attitude, behavior, and mannerism is misinterpreted by those individuals, the Black student is then diagnosed as having special needs. In this case, students are given IEPs and are classified as ADD, ADHD, or BD, or another term describing presumed disabilities. In other cases of mislabeling or labeling, Black children are suspended or expelled. In the state of Oklahoma,

> *"Black students were the group with the largest share of expulsions. Nearly 5 percent of Black students in special education, or 725 children, were expelled from Oklahoma schools – more than four times the rate for White students in special education."* [23]

Since the Black Church has historically been concerned about Black education, it must take up the mantle in the 21st century and continue in that prophetic tradition. Education is a social justice issue that must be important to the Black Church. When thousands of Black students in the state of Oklahoma are consistently underperforming, the Black Church must see itself as an instrumental and transformative institution that God can use to help address this issue. Prophetic activism extends beyond protests, marches, and boycotts; it extends to partnering with other agencies to address any issue that marginalizes and oppresses vulnerable communities.

When a church is prophetically active, it holds several elements at the forefront of its mission: freedom, justice, liberation, and equality. God has called the church to defend, protect, and empower vulnerable and underserved communities. Throughout the biblical narrative, we

[23] Robson, Nate, "Kicked from School: Minorities in Special Ed." Oklahoma Watch, Oct. 28, 2019. https://oklahomawatch.org/2015/10/29/kicked-from-school-minorities-in-special-ed/

find God consistently giving the command to uplift and empower those individuals and communities that have been marginalized. The theology of the Black church is rooted in addressing the social, political, and economic injustices that Black people face daily. The education of Black students deserves the same attention. The Black Church must continue moving beyond its four walls and offer the community tools and resources. Andrew Billingsley found in his research, that the Black Church moves,

> *"beyond its purely spiritual or religious or privatization mission to embrace its communal mission, provided that the church, as an organization, is strong, stable, and resourceful and provided that the minister, as a leader, is strong, charismatic, innovative, and community-oriented."* [24]

The Black Church must see itself as an agent of social transformation, seeking to impact and empower the community in which it sits. Many Black churches see their mission as feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, but there is also a need to address the issue of education amongst Black students. This paper is an attempt to lay out a blueprint on how and why Black churches must get involved in education. Why do Black Preachers have to move beyond the narrow view of the gospel where we feed and clothe and don't create partnerships and spaces for Black students to improve their academic performance?

The presence of a Black authority figure better serves Black students and has been shown to improve academic outcomes.

> *"Students of color, particularly those living and attending schools in disadvantaged settings, benefit from seeing role models of their race in a position*

[24] Billingsley, Andrew, *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003: 11

of authority. In particular, some scholars have suggested that having an adult role model who exemplifies academic success could alleviate the stigma of "acting White" among some students of color (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986)." [25]

Definition of Major Terms

Black Church-Although we know "the Black Church" is not a monolithic body, we can create a definition that encompasses the majority of what we would call the "Black Church." The Black Church is any church that has a predominantly Black congregation. Even though Black churches don't all have shared values or shared aspirations, there is still a need to identify who the Black church is.

Educational Achievement- students' academic performance and ability to set, reach, and master their goals. These goals can be personally and educationally based and developed by the student, their parent or teacher, and the school district. The educational achievement of students includes increasing each student's ability to perform at grade level or even higher for students who are struggling in core subjects. Educational achievement will likely differ from student to student.

Identity- the set of qualities and beliefs that make up a person or a group of persons

Community-a group of people with common interests that possess values, morals, etc.

Underserved-not provided with enough help or services, or not given high-quality services.

[25] Goldhaber, Dan, Roddy Theobald, and Christopher Tien, "Why We Need a Diverse Teacher Workforce." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 100, no. 5, 2019: 25–30. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26614877.

Equity-Equity "reallocates resources and support to those who need differentiated approach so they can succeed and thrive."

Educational Equity-each child receives what they need to develop their full academic and social potential.

Partnerships-a relationship between persons or institutions.

Education/Academic Achievement identifiable success in the area of scholarship or disciplined study.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)- is a written document of the educational program designed to meet a child's individual needs.

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapters two through six are each briefly described below.

Chapter 2: Interview with Social Justice Leader Rev. Michael A. Walrond.

This chapter provides two interviews with Rev. Michael A. Walrond, the Senior Pastor of the First Corinthian Baptist Church, who has served as the pastor for the past 19 years. In the first interview, he discussed his upbringing and the influences that led him into ministry. In this second interview, we discussed how his vision to create the Hope Center and the Dream Center came to fruition and how he assessed the community's needs for their creation. Also Pastor Walrond discusses his book and what led him to write and publish a book on the need for

authenticity in the culture. We also will look at the history of First Corinthian Baptist Church and its history of community action and involvement under the leadership of Pastor Walrond.

Chapter 3: Ministerial Competencies

In this chapter, I present three Ministerial competencies and how they intersect with the topic of this dissertation. The three that were chosen were Preacher, Pastor, and Change Agent. Each of these competencies is pivotal for the minister within the church and community. Ministry competency is about appropriately applying knowledge and skills toward achieving a desired result within a specific context.

Chapter 4 Methodology

In this chapter, a group of pastors, educators, and lay persons were interviewed about the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum Part I. They were asked questions regarding the different components of the program and what additions they would make from their personal and professional perspective. The questions they were asked spoke directly to their opinion of the Black Church, its values, and thoughts regarding the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum. In the process of gathering the information, the goal was to assess the focus group if they saw the Black church as having the capability to help increase the academic performance of Black children through program creation and community partnerships. In this chapter, there is also an outline for a plan of implementation that provides a basic structure on how to create an Excellence through Exposure program in the church and partner with a local school.

Chapter 5 Findings

The findings from the respondents are in this chapter. Each of them expressed that the Black church with its values and resources could use the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum and partner with local schools to improve Black students' academic achievement. The implementation of this program increased students' overall self-esteem as well as their academic performance at their respective schools. The feedback from the parents, teachers, and administrators was that each child who participated in the program displayed academic improvement. The additions to the program that they suggested makeup Excellence through Exposure Part II, which included sessions on Social-Emotional Learning.

This chapter presents the breakdown of the responses from those who were interviewed: Curricular Additions and Black Church Values. By way of narrative, each respondent's answers are highlighted as to the additions that would be made to the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum and the Black Church Values that can aid in improving the academic performance of Black students.

Chapter 6 Conclusions (Summary & Critiques of the Study)

This chapter interprets and describes findings from the interview (see Chapter 2), the Ministerial Competencies (see Chapter 3), the method of the study (see Chapter 4), and the results (see Chapter 5). This chapter also looks at the limitations of the study and possible ways that denominations and policymakers can be actively involved in helping increase the academic performance of Black students. In conclusion, we outline the next steps for Black churches on how they can address the disparity in education and its often negative effects on Black students.

Chapter 2: Activist Leader (Pastor Michael Walrond)

Chapter 2 provides an interview with Rev. Michael A. Walrond, the Senior Pastor of the First Corinthian Baptist Church who has served as the pastor for the past 19 years. In this interview, there is information on how his vision came about to create the Hope Center and the Dream Center, non-profit arms of the church designed to address the needs of the community. We also will look at the history of First Corinthian Baptist Church and its history of community action and involvement.

Interview #1

Where did you grow up?

"Freeport, New York."

What is the date of your birth?

"May 26, 1971."

Before becoming the Senior Pastor of First Corinthian Baptist Church, did you pastor another church?

"Yes, Zion Temple UCC in Durham, North Carolina."

What do you believe is the primary responsibility of the preacher/pastor in today's culture?

"Never feel obligated to remain safe in creedal and doctrinal language."

What do you believe has been your primary role as the Senior Pastor of the church?

"Lead the people theologically, teach from your own theological framework. Always be in a space where you are using your imagination to create the community you believe God wants to see. Learn, relearn, imagine, and dream theologically."

What motivates you to do transformative ministry? Your church has several different programs, which we will get to in the second interview, but my first question is, what motivates you to do that type of ministry that exists at FCBC?

"That is simple, the needs of the people. Helping people believe that they possess unlimited possibilities and that if they dare to dream, God can make their dreams come true."

What would you suggest church leaders do in order to advance their institution?

"I would share with other church leaders that they should study other industries. Discover how they do what they do and how they execute their vision. There is a book entitled *The Innovators DNA* and in this book, it discusses five skills to generate ideas, collaborate with colleagues to implement those, and sharpen your organization's competitive edge by building innovation skills into its culture. When you study what other innovators do, you can apply it within the church context."

Interview #2

Pastor Michael Walrond is the Social Justice Leader I have chosen to interview for the D. Min. degree. His call to ministry happened while he was a student at Morehouse College. He marks the exact date of his call as October 29, 1989, while he was a freshman. He stated that,

> " For a couple of months before that moment, I was experiencing what I thought was some kind of an anxiety attack. I made an appointment with the counselor on campus. Things were going well. There wasn't anything wrong, but there was this heaviness and weightiness that stayed with me. And I made this appointment. And so it's October 29th. It was a Sunday morning. I was taking a shower and thought I was having a nervous breakdown. I felt like I was having a breakdown and I remember grabbing my towel, running out of the bathroom, and going into my room. And I just started crying and I couldn't stop crying. And my roommate asked me what was wrong. He thought I was kind of flipping out because it was like really confused crying. And he got the Resident Assistant and he came in, but I couldn't verbalize all I could do was cry."
>
> "I couldn't stop crying and the first thing I said to them when I did talk was "I'm going to be a preacher." That was never in my mind to say, it just came out. And they were like, what? I was like, "Yeah, I'm gonna be a preacher." And so I had made my mind that day I was gonna go to church."

Pastor Mike describes that as one of the most transformative moment in this life, where he felt an authentic call by God to preach. He stated that up until then, he never had any expectation of being a preacher, yet when he shared his call to one of his mentors, Rev. Dr. Gregory Groover, he shared with Pastor Mike that he already knew that was going to happen.

It was after that transformative experience that Pastor Mike and I met on the basketball court and I invited him to attend church with me. Some 34 years later, we both have been in ministry. Pastor Mike shared his call with several other people who were amazed at this new

revelation and assignment. He said that no one in his family was in ministry, and added, "Coming up in my house to be a preacher wasn't on my agenda."

I asked Pastor Mike what his professional goals were when he first went off to college. He replied, "I was going to be a lawyer, but then the call happened." He asked his mentor Dr. Groover what he should do with this call and Dr. Groover replied, "Just be a student." Pastor Mike marks that as the beginning of his ministerial journey and his love for knowledge. I asked Pastor Mike when he first became involved or aware of social justice. He replied,

> " Even prior to my call, I think it became important to me. Being on Morehouse College campus in the late 80s was a kind of culturally transforming moment. It was hard not to care about social justice with the legacy of great Morehouse leaders and men and not feel some compulsion." He stated further, "I always understood how we as a people had suffered from radical inequalities. Even when I was in high school, even though I was getting in trouble and all that kind of stuff, I was very keenly aware of the impact of racism on our culture. And so I would say once I really accepted my call. Understanding the nuances of my call and understanding how social justice would be part of my call was woven in from the very beginning."

He said that serving as the President of the Martin Luther King Jr. Chapel Assistants under the leadership and direction of the Dean of the Chapel Rev. Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter made him even more keenly aware of the topic of social justice. This past spring Pastor Mike delivered the Baccalaureate Address to the Class of 2023 at Morehouse College. The video of his address has received thousands upon thousands of views, so I asked him about that message

and the impact it had on him and what impact he hoped it had on the graduation seniors. He replied,

> "The sermon was about Joshua who was being handed leadership, and was charged with leading Israel after Moses. As he begins his journey, I believe Joshua had a form of PTSD--Post Traumatic Stress Disorder--from his experience with the people before who wanted to kill him because he and Caleb trusted in God and the people did not. So God reinforces that he is the right person, but also that God would be with him. And I wanted them in a very simple way to understand that they had experienced a lot of trauma at Morehouse because of having to be students during pandemic when COVID hit and it in some ways shattered their experience. Plus, all the other things that I think everyone was going through on the campus at the time to make it through COVID. And I wanted them to know that if they had survived that, that they stand in the lineage of trauma as Black men in this country. If they can survive that, then once they leave Morehouse there is nothing that they will be confronted with that they won't be able to survive as well."

Pastor Mike said this was the second time he'd returned to his alma mater to deliver a Baccalaureate address. This second time was also his 30th class reunion and several of his classmates had sons graduating from Morehouse. It was a watershed moment for Pastor Mike to deliver a powerful address at Morehouse during this particular period.

I asked about his current pastorate at the First Corinthian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York. I asked if FCBC was involved in any social justice issues prior to his arrival and he

replied that the church had a fairly robust Food Pantry. This was created primarily because the church was located in a food desert, where the local residents did not have access to healthy food, so they created the food pantry in order to address that need. This program was similar to the program created by the Black Panther Party during the 1960s. I asked Pastor Mike how he determines what ministries will be created to address the main issues facing the community where the church is located and he replied, "We treat people's needs as holy." This phrase comes from Dr. Ombrey Hendricks in his book *The Politics of Jesus*. This phrase references,

> *"human beings as creations of the divine, imbued with the breath of God's own self; the things they need to survive (food, water, air, love, justice, economic stability, etc.) must be treated as essential and consecrated, or "holy."* [26]

Pastor Mike explained that in every community, there are many needs, and the church must use its imagination, creativity, and ingenuity to address those needs. I followed up with questions about the Hope (Healing On Purpose and Evolving) Center and the Dream Center, two not-for-profit programs created from FCBC. According to the website, the Hope Center "is the manifestation of Senior Pastor Michael A. Walrond's vision, to effectively support the vast mental health needs of the parishioners of First Corinthian Baptist Church, and the Harlem community at large." According to their website: "The Center seeks to minimize the stigma around communities of color when seeking mental health services. It prides itself in having licensed clinicians who utilize evidence-based therapeutic practices to support a variety of daily living challenges including depression, trauma, sexual abuse and bereavement."

[26] Hendricks, Obery M., *The Politics of Jesus: Discovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 2006.

I asked Pastor Mike what was his vision for creating the Hope Center. He replied,

> "The Hope Center really was an overflow of my personal experience. Around 2011, I was really in a very emotionally bad place and it caused me to reach out and find a therapist. I found a therapist within a year and I tell people that she literally saved my life. It was after that I became really passionate about providing mental health services to people in the community. So in 2012, we hired a therapist on staff at the church."

Pastor Mike explained that he knew that in the Black community, there is a stigma about receiving mental health, and he wanted to address that stigma after an encounter with one of his members. He stated,

> "I was in the lobby of the church and I saw a young woman coming into the church and the receptionist asked her who was she there to see. The woman leaned over and whispered the therapist's name. It was at that moment that I knew we had to create a larger program to address the stigma behind mental health in the Black community. And so we have a trustee who is a developer and was developing a property around the corner for apartment affordable housing. And we just went to an agreement that we would get the first floor and in 2016 we birthed the Hope Center."

The Hope Center has total wrap-around services, which means it provides classes for yoga, meditation, gardening, and other courses. The Hope Center also has a health clinic where community residents can get a check-up and prescription medicine.

FCBC also has the Dream Center, another church non-profit branch. As stated on the website, the Dream Center "offers visionaries and dreamers opportunities for EXPRESSION, EXPLORATION, and EMPOWERMENT through free workshops and events centered on creative arts, leadership development, economic empowerment, technology, entrepreneurship, and health and wellness. From awakening dormant dreamers to birthing valiant visionaries, The Dream Center is a multifaceted transformative hub that unearths unlimited possibilities while simultaneously shaping the winds of perception. As a self-sustaining multigenerational extension of First Corinthian Baptist Church (FCBC), The Dream Center is the tangible vision of Senior Pastor Michael A. Walrond, Jr. The Dream Center inspires, informs, and ignites the imaginations of visionaries and dreamers across a myriad of genres." I asked Pastor Mike, "How did the idea of the Dream Center come about?" He replied,

> "There was a school right around where FCBC is located that we adopted. The building the school was located in was split so that two floors were dedicated to the charter school, and the other two floors were to the district school. The charter school was receiving funding, so it looked nice. They had computers, equipment, and everything, but the charter school floors were worn down. Add to that, they were eliminating classes in the district school, the art, theatre and physical education classes. I decided that if the district won't provide these classes, the church should be creating these and other classes for the students. So, along with my Associate Pastor at that time, we created the Dream Center, where we offered classes in screenwriting, directing, leadership development, money management, etc."

Pastor Mike said that even during the pandemic the programs went virtual and the Dream Center has existed for 13 years. The goal of the Dream Center and the Hope Center is to meet the needs of the community. Where there is something missing, the church should step in and provide those services in order that the lives of the people in the community are made better. He stated that it is not enough to have good ideas, you must do ministry with the needs of the people in mind. There has to be a mandate to redress the social injustices that people in many communities go through. The Hope Center and The Dream Center are ways to address some of those specific needs. I followed up with asking Pastor Mike if he thought the Hope Center and Dream Center could be replicated in different cities across the country and he said,

> "Yes, the Hope Center especially can be replicated in other cities. What the pandemic revealed is that many people are suffering with mental illness and are in need of some kind of therapy. During the pandemic since 72% of Americans are suffering some form of depression. And also, the mental health field is a workforce in crisis because you have more people experiencing mental health breakdowns than you have practitioners. So no matter where you are in the country, there will be a need. For that the only challenge in the institution, the faith based institution church is that they must do the work of destigmatizing the narrative around that. Mental health is not just important for New York City post pandemic, it is important for people across this country."

Pastor Mike expressed that he feels the same way about the Dream Center as he does the Hope Center regarding the possibility of replicating the model across the country. He stated, "Churches should see what is missing or has been taken out of the schools and then find ways to

provide it in the their churches." Pastor Mike believes that after-school programs are good, but programming should expand to include arts, music, etc. He stated,

> "What would it look like if your church offered film producing, directing, cinematography, acting . . .yoga, etc. Hope Centers across this country can significantly help students who are in school districts that are cutting programs. More churches are needed to get involved in helping young people discover their dreams and goals."

I shifted the conversation and asked Pastor Mike what he thought were three things that the Black Church should be concerned about in the future. I asked this question in light of all the national conversations that are taking places regarding the relevancy and impact of the Black Church. Pastor Mike stated the Black church should be concerned about its existence:

> "I think that's a big issue that we had when you look at the data. The data is suggesting that the church is in a steep decline as a whole. For the first time in American history, less than 50% of people believe. Claims to make some religious affiliation. So if these numbers keep going down. And more and more millennials and Gen Z disconnect from the church. African American community sensibilities are a little bit stronger than some of the other communities but if the church is in crisis as a whole, it will be in crisis, so the church has to wrestle through its existence and that's across the board. As a result of the pandemic, you can go to any church you desire now without any limitations. If the average age of your church is 60 and not 20-30, you have to ask some important questions about

its relevance and existence. When the 60s get older and die, there will be nobody there."

Pastor Walrond states the second concern the Black church should have is theological:

> "Luther's theological reformation focuses on the church's practices, we need a reformation of our theological assumptions. We need to go further and investigate the nature of our doctrines, our language, systems of engagement. Pastor Mike goes further and says, "many of the theological presumptions we have today are not culturally relevant. And I think that's another reason why we're losing young people, because we're operating antiquated space and antiquated language and antiquated way of organizing and being, which is going to get aid. We have to really press some our theological assumptions and my contention is that the biggest problem for any church before us is that we don't understand the, we don't necessarily understand the historical context of how we, how Christianity was given."

Pastor Walrond is convinced that many of the theological assumptions we make today in our churches also further perpetuate oppressive narratives that are based on "conquest and domination." He states that the church must focus on one particular word that should be the foundation of every church: "discipleship." "We have done well at creating members, but have not focused on discipleship." Discipleship is about following the teaching and practices of Jesus. The final concern that the church should have is on sharing and spreading "love" to all

communities. So many spaces that claim to be safe spaces are not safe at all for women, the LGBTQ+ community, as well as other marginalized people. Pastor Walrond expressed that the fundamental ethos of cannot be judgment but in fact love, he states, "love is foundation of who we are."

I shifted the conversation and asked him questions regarding his new book that was released in the Spring of 2023 entitled *Searching for Agabus: Embracing Authenticity and Finding Your Way To You*. He states in the forward of the book,

> "In an age of conformity, being yourself is a courageous act. I wish it wasn't the case. Living authentically should be the norm. Being true to yourself should be the standard by which we live. Sadly it is not. Conforming to what others believe we should be is the easy way out, especially when there's a reluctance to struggle to be at ease in one's own skin."[27]

He goes further and states,

> "The courageous are fueled by a deep desire to live in the fullness of authenticity. The courageous live boldly and freely in a realm fashioned by their imagination--an imagination that can be stifled and suffocated in an effort to conform to what and who others believe we should be."

I asked Pastor Walrond about a particular part of the book where he writes,

> "Until now, I never thought what God's feast could be or would be, but that idea that God provide a feast resonates with me. For those who know hunger, those

[27] Walrond, Michael A., *Searching for Agabus: Embracing Authenticity and Finding Your Way to You*. Broadleaf Publishing, 2023.

> who are in famine, God's feast is provisioned during hungry times. You are God's feast. You are God's provision during these hungry times." [28]

What does it mean to be "God's provision during these hungry times"?

> "In the context of the famine in the land. Oh, I said that there is a hunger for authenticity in our culture. It is a hunger for authenticity. People are starving for authenticity and for those who know starvation and hunger, a feast is like an oasis. So embracing our authenticity, understanding that we are not only God's feast for God's joy that we in our authenticity are the provision for a world starving for authenticity."

Pastor Walrond reiterated that one of the primary reason he wrote the book was he saw people living life based on how they want others to see them and not the authentic life they have been given by God. He felt compelled to challenge the culture of its need for authenticity in a world that judges, categorizes, and classifies people off of a 30-second reel. I asked him about another section of the book where he states;

> "Maybe the key to untangling is knowing and believing that you were born worthy-that you were born with value. You were born with everything you need to be a beautiful expression of your humanity."[29]

I told him that this quote I found goes hand in hand with a sermon he preached a few months ago where he used the scene of Jesus being baptized in the Jordan River and the skies

[28] Ibid, 36
[29] Walrond, *Searching for Agabus*, 69

open, and God confirms the worth of Jesus by saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” He stated that God sees Jesus as worthy before Jesus performs any miracle, heals anybody. He said that Jesus was born and baptized worthy. I asked him to explain what he means by “You were born worthy.”

> “I think many people don't realize we're born with everything we need to fully show up. As human beings in this world as a full expression of our humanity. But life and time and people and trauma have a way of beating that out of us. We become dependent on the opinions of others dependent on the affirmation from others dependent on validation from others versus walking in the fullness of our uniqueness and realizing. There was a line in the movie *Jerry Maguire.* The main character tells his love interest that she “completes” him. That always bothered me because it implies that I need somebody to complete me, it means God's work was half done when he made me.”

Pastor Walrond was also bothered by a book entitled *From Good to Great.* He stated,

> “I rebuke that book because the reality is we set these tall standards of greatness up, and then the greatness defining it is subjective. The problem I have theologically is that there's no way God says something is great that he made. He said it's good. So, as I aim for greatness or goodness, well, the issue is what does goodness mean for God if a man’s goodness means holding complete and lacking nothing. That's good to be whole, complete and lacking nothing. So if we understood that we were born with value, we would stop this chasing around the game of validation for people who may be in the thirst within themselves.”

How does that connect to the sermon that you preach regarding the affirmation of the worth of Jesus from God?

> "So that's what it means. So for Jesus in the context of that passage. Gee, before Jesus does anything, God said you are my son. I love you and I'm pleased with you and he does nothing yet. He did nothing yet. And the key is to own, embrace, and accept that love without performance needed."

Do you believe that what you have written about in your book is on social justice?

> "There is a chapter in my book where I write on the danger of looking for "likes." In that chapter, I discuss the reality that people are looking for validation in today's society. Some form a validation can be healthy, but in this era where your validation is based on the life you are pretending to live, that can be dangerous. This book is a form of resistance. A challenge to Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. I did not say it in the book, but that if you claim to be a social justice advocate, but you have no critique of social media, your social justice is lacking."

Pastor Walrond believes many pastors and preachers are not critical of social media because they benefit from it. They are capitalizing on the very system that is crippling their people. He states,

> "You can't be prophetic if you're busy looking for "likes," which means you always curtail your message to get a certain response that is positive. That's not the way of a prophet. So, the book was a complete critique of the kind of cultural

mill you are in right now. Celebrity culture and what I call this addiction to validation, this addiction to affirmation."

It was at this time we concluded the interview and I thanked Pastor Walrond for his time and responses.

History of First Corinthian Baptist Church

Pastor Walrond provided information of the First Corinthian Baptist Church's history from the archives of the church. Further detailed information can be found on the church's website: https://fcbcnyc.org/online.

First Corinthian Baptist Church (FCBC) was organized in 1933 when a few faithful believers gathered in the home of Mother Sloan. There is no record of the minister who officiated over the proceedings at the time of origin. Shortly after, the congregation moved into a loft apartment located at 105 West 117th Street in New York City where the Reverend W.L. Johnson served the congregation as its first pastor.

In 1942, the Reverend Thomas H. McKinzie, Sr. was called to serve as FCBC's fourth pastor. Over the next 41 years of his ministry, Pastor McKinzie proved himself to be a visionary and a truly anointed leader of God's people. As a result of his dynamic leadership, the church grew rapidly. Dr. McKinzie led the congregation into its present building location, 1912 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. Dr. McKinzie mobilized the church for ministry by skillfully organizing more than 17 church auxiliaries. Pastor McKinzie believed that "a church should be more than just bricks and glass that present an image of heaven, but it should play a vital role in the daily lives of the community, helping to guide its neighbors through the myriad of problems that confront them daily." Dr. McKinzie served faithfully until his death in 1983.

Following the death of Dr. McKinzie Sr., the church called his son and former co-pastor, Reverend Thomas H. McKinzie, Jr, to the office of pastor. Pastor McKinzie Jr. organized the New Converts Committee, Pulpit Aide Ministry, and the New Vision Ministry (formerly the First Lady's Ministry). During his pastoral tenure, the church building was named as a historic landmark by the Landmark Conservatory. One of the highlights of his ministry was his courageous decision to prepare and ordain four women to the office of deacons. Pastor McKinzie Jr. served until his death in 1995.

In 1996, the church called Reverend Edward Derrik Porter to serve as its sixth pastor. He launched a five-year Vision 2000 Capital Campaign that endeavored to raise $1.5 million. Reverend Porter resigned on May 31, 2003, as he sensed the call of God upon his life directing him into another dimension of ministry.

On July 25, 2004, the FCBC congregation welcomed Reverend Michael A. Walrond, Jr., his wife and partner in ministry, Reverend Dr. LaKeesha Walrond, and their two children, Michael III and Jasmyn Dominique, as its First Family.

Pastor Walrond has been fiercely dedicated to "making disciples that transform the world." Through his commitment to God's commandments and will, several ministries have been birthed. Pastor Mike's love for teaching led to the implementation of Noonday Bible Study, Thursday Night Discipleship Training, and several leadership workshops and seminars. Under his leadership, FCBC membership has grown from 350 to nearly 10,000+ disciples.

In 2006, Pastor Walrond successfully executed a $500,000 Vision Campaign that restored and renewed FCBC's interior. With a vision of making the arts more accessible to the Harlem community, FCBC launched 'The Sanctuary,' which is dedicated to producing and presenting theatrical, musical and visual art that reflects the community in which it serves. In 2017, FCBC

completed a $1,000,000 upgrade to our sound and lighting system that enhances the worship and arts experience.

In addition to the physical improvements of the building, Pastor Walrond has been working diligently to build an organized and effective supportive team to help communicate and implement God's vision for FCBC. Pastor Walrond's wife and partner in ministry, the Reverend Dr. LaKeesha Walrond began serving as Executive Pastor in 2006.

In 2012, Pastor Mike's foresight and passion for the Harlem community shaped the vision for the FCBC Community Development Corporation (CDC). The most ambitious project to date of the FCBC CDC is The Dream Center, a transformative space designed to awaken dreams of the community. Focused on creative arts, leadership development, and economic empowerment, The Dream Center offers over twenty-five completely free programs to the Harlem community for all ages, races, and backgrounds.

With a desire to deeply engage the issues of the community, in December of 2016 Pastor Mike opened the H.O.P.E. (Healing On Purpose and Evolving) Center; the first faith-based mental health facility in Harlem. The H.O.P.E. Center is a manifestation of Pastor Mike's vision to effectively support the vast mental health needs of the community. The center seeks to minimize the stigma that exists in many communities of color when seeking mental health services.

First Corinthian Baptist Church Identity Statement

"We are an ever-evolving community of visionaries, dreamers, and doers who have been called by God to live the lives we were created to live; commanded by God to love beyond the limits of our prejudices, and commissioned by God to serve."

Chapter 3: Ministerial Competencies

Chapter 3 presents the Ministerial Competencies and the three that have been chosen and how they intersect with the topic of this dissertation. The three that were chosen--Preacher, Change Agent, and Pastor--each play a pivotal role in the community and as it connects to education. Ministry competency is about appropriately applying knowledge and skills toward achieving a desired result within a specific context.

Preaching

According to the guidelines for this project, the role and purpose of the preacher is to be able to have strong delivery, good organization of thought, and biblically based interpretation, challenging the congregation to spiritual growth. Candidate's preaching is spirit-centered; delivery is effective and addresses contemporary concerns with well-prepared, Christ-centered material. Over the course of my 30-plus years doing part/full-time ministry I believe that my preaching has matured. When I was first called to the ministry, my pastor, Rev. Dr Frank Thomas, currently the Director of the Compelling Preaching Initiative Christian Theological Seminary, shared with me that my first calling was "not to preach but to prepare." This was a gentle encouragement from him to me to not be so eager to mount pulpits and preach from an empty well, but rather read, study, learn, and listen to preachers on how to be effective in the craft. As a young boy, my preaching was primarily shaped by preachers who were uneducated by no fault of their own but were effective wordsmiths. They were able to give powerful illustrations, tell great stories, and bring color to all the biblical narratives. Most of them were not social justice preachers, but they were more mainstream evangelical preachers. As I got

older I was eventually exposed to preachers who had seminary training and some who had earned doctorate degrees. It was this type of preaching that has impacted my ministry most.

Prophetic Preaching

These preachers were not only eloquent, articulate, and knowledgeable communicators, but they also spoke "truth to power" to their people. They were not afraid to include in their sermonic discourse what they believed God was saying about the systems and structures that were oppressing and exploiting certain groups of people. This type of preaching appealed to me because much of the preaching I heard growing up focused on individual sin and salvation. The lingering question for me was, "If people need transformation, don't systems and structures need transformation as well?" Who is preaching to the systems that are constantly engaged in undermining the freedom and liberation of marginalized people? What does God have to say about systems that perpetuate poverty and violence in vulnerable communities? These and other questions have remained with me throughout my tenure as pastor/preacher in my church context. For me, preaching has never been about assisting people to reach heaven or helping people live prosperous and wealthy lives. My preaching is about trying to help shape God's people to honor the two greatest commandments through every facet of their lives: *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39 NKJV* Preaching is more than helping a person strengthen their relationship with God; it is also about helping them see that they have a responsibility to be as good of a neighbor to others as they are to themself.

A good neighbor does not live isolated and unaffected by the world, they live with the desire to see others treated with dignity and fairness. Hyveth Williams ,writing on social justice, states,

> *"Biblical social justice may be defined as a divine mandate of faith and fundamental expression of Christian discipleship "to make right" one's relationship with God, others and natural creation. Social justice concerns, therefore, should focus on more than just relations between groups within society, the justice of individual conduct or justice for individuals. The historical and theoretical idea of social justice is that all people should have equal access to wealth, health, well-being, fair dealing and all privileges generally endowed to one group over another due to race or gender." [30]*

The preacher has a responsibility to not only speak the Word of God but also give voice to the voiceless. Those who have had their voices muted because of stereotypes, prejudices, and systemic discrimination. I see that as my role and responsibility every time I mount the sacred desk. Some of my preaching heroes that I have heard and read include Rev. Dr. Samuel Dewitt Proctor, Rev. Dr. Charles L. Booth, Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright, Rev Dr. Adam Clayton Powell, Rev. Dr. Frederick G. Sampson, Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall Wynn, Rev. Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, and Rev. Dr. Johnny Ray Youngblood. These and a host of others, in my opinion, are masters at the craft of preaching and represent the best of the Black preaching tradition. Whereas after over 30

[30] Williams, Hyveth, "Preaching Social Justice." Faculty Publications. Fall, 2021. https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/4173

years of preaching, I am still trying to find my voice while continuing to be influenced by these preaching geniuses.

My Site Team has heard me preach several times over the course of this past year and I have shared with them my desire to continue to grow in the craft of preaching. They all have given me feedback and their reflective opinions on whether they thought the sermons that were preached were a faithful interpretation of the text, easily understood by the listeners and able to applied to their lives. Many of them said they had never before heard what would be classified as a "social justice" sermon. Much of the preaching that had influenced their lives was more evangelical conservative, so to hear a sermon that addressed social, economic, and political concerns was new to them. They encouraged me to continue preaching and being faithful to the biblical text, not only for the personal growth of the people, but also speaking "truth to power."

One of the sermons I delivered that my Site Team heard was for the Freedom Fiesta that is an event held in Oklahoma City, honoring the 60th Anniversary of the Sit-In Movement led by Clara Luper and 13 of her students. I was the guest preacher for that event, and the text that I lifted for the day was taken from Joshua the 6 chapter, where the narrative is when Joshua and the children of Israel tear down the walls of Jericho. The sermon centered on the children of Israel working together to tear down the walls that were preventing them from getting to the promised land. I drew the connection that when those of us who are freedom-loving, justice-seeking, mercy-giving people work together, walls of discrimination, racism, homophobia, and marginalization will come down.

The Site Team heard this sermon and gave me positive feedback. Some of their comments were: "effective delivery," "socially conscious," "strong application," "relevant," and "timely." The Site Team encouraged me to continue to develop my preaching to be more

inclusive toward allies from outside of the Black community, which they believed would broaden the audience of my sermons. Furthermore, they affirmed my style, delivery, and interpretation of the text.

The preaching tradition in the Black church has always afforded it's constituents an opportunity to see themselves outside of "white gaze". An individual may have to work five days a week around the dominant white culture and suffer from micro-aggressions and overt racism, that left them weary and work at the weeks end, but when Sunday morning came they could be confident that the preacher would give them a "word from the Lord", that would inspire and motivate them to keep pressing forward. Dr. Henry Mitchell states this,

> "The arrival of truth about preaching and worship in the Black churches and communities has brought about huge improvement in Black spiritual self-esteem. Most Blacks have ceased to be ashamed of deep and healthy emotion in worship, and they are keenly aware of its beauty and healing qualities. This freedom of expression in pulpit and pew has permitted an integrity of identity that not only healed; it has empowered. It stood believers on their feet. One can no longer hate oneself as Black in color and culture, and at the same time truly love the God who made the self, Black." [31]

Preaching in the Black church context is not monolithic, Black preachers do not preach the same way, the same style or even possess similar hermeneutics. But as Dr. Mitchell raises in another portion of his writing, the Black preacher who functions in whatever context they are in has historical provide Black people with necessary tools to survive in American culture. He

[31] Mitchell, Henry H., *Black Preaching*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1979.

states, “Perhaps the greatest evidence of the power of Black preaching is that the Black belief system of folk Christianity has kept its believers alive and coping—even when in an oppressed condition that would have crushed many.” [32]

Preaching Education as a Social Justice Issue

Preaching on education as a social justice issue is vitally important to the Black community. As I stated earlier in this dissertation, “Education is a social justice issue,” and the preacher must use their hermeneutical skills to preach prophetic messages that speak to the issue of justice and equity in education. The usual sermons that parishioners hear on social justice are the subjects of homelessness and hunger. While those are important issues, the challenge for the preacher is to expand their prophetic witness and address the issue of education as well. Many preachers need to discover that social justice is tethered to salvation and the bible is replete with instructions from God to protect the weak, care for the widow and welcome the foreigner. In the Old and New Testaments the language of justice consistently comes up and reveals that God is concerned about those who are marginalized and oppressed. This is not an option for some and can be ignored by others, it is a mandate for every preacher to speak to underfunding of schools, low teacher pay, inadequate resources, the book banning, the assault on the teaching of Black history, and a host of other issues. These topics are worthy of the preacher’s attention in order to awaken the conscience of people so that they can hear and believe where God stands on these and other issues. Preaching on education as a social justice issue is prophetic preaching as one author points out,

[32] Ibid.

> "Prophetic preaching which is not the preaching of prophecy, although prophecy can be preached prophetically. It more than any other method, creatively speaks on behalf of others about injustices and inadequacies of the present and unfulfilled possibilities of the future, as did the divinely appointed prophets of ancient Israel. Prophetic preaching critically questions the status quo by speaking truth to power, offering biblical/theological insights into current situations, challenging listeners to repent as well as to return to faithfulness to God, to exercise God's righteousness as well as His justice." [33]

Pastor

Jeremiah 3:15 records, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." The ministerial competency I have chosen is the role and function of the "Pastor." The role and call of the pastor differs from the role and call of the preacher. Particularly within the Black church context, many think they are one and the same and I would challenge their proposition. The role of the preacher is to rightly interpret scripture through the medium of preaching or proclaiming God's Word. The role of the pastor is to care, nurture, feed, lead, guide and guide, God's people. The pastor is expected to fulfill many different roles. We expect them to lead worship, preach a sermon, visit the sick, dedicate babies, serve communion, bury the dead, and a host of many other expectations that people of the pastor have. As my Social Justice Mentor Pastor Walrond states in his interview for this project, "Pastors are called to treat the people's needs as holy."

[33] Williams, Hyveth, "Preaching Social Justice." Faculty Publications. 4173, Fall 2021.

Pastors view the people/congregations and treat their needs as sacred and deserving of being addressed by God. Pastors are called to look at their congregations through the lens of God and see them as people who need healing, direction, peace, and power. What I have learned in my 25 years of pastoring the same congregation in Oklahoma City's Fifth Street Baptist Church is that the effectiveness of your ministry (pastorate) is determined by your theological disposition.

The theological questions: How do you view God?, How do you view God's people?, What do you believe God expects from his people?, To what degree should the people depend on God in their lives?, and What systems exist that need to be addressed and challenged via the pulpit? These and other questions shaped my opinion on how one pastors God's people. How you view God's role in the lives of individuals shapes how you care for and feed those people.

> *"For good or for ill, every pastor or priest exercises in his ministry a type of theology. When delivering a sermon or comforting parishioners in their moments of bereavement, illness, or tragedy, the pastor articulates implicitly a theological outlook to the people s/he serves if not also to him. There ought to lie at the heart of every pastor a consideration if not anxiety about the kind of theology he purports and articulates when exercising his everyday pastoral duties. There is always a risk, however, that his theology may be inadequate and not fit for purpose in mentoring or accompanying the faith he sees in the lives of the people he serves."* [34]

[34] Donnelly, Brian. "The Pastor's Theology." The Furrow, vol. 66, no. 6, 2015: 348–53. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24636039. Accessed 12 Sept. 2023.

In today's culture, I believe that the roles of pastors at its heart have not changed but I do believe the expectations are completely different. With social media dictating and directing much of what happens in cultures. Many pastors are finding themselves having to become social media savvy, post pictures and videos attempting to connect to their congregants and those looking for a congregation to connect with. Pastors have to spend time meeting with the media team as well as visit the sick and preparing sermons. Pastors are faced with not just caring for their congregations, but they are also challenged with caring for themselves. Caring for people can cause burnout, if you are not caring for yourself. Many pastors suffer from burnout quickly and easily in ministry. They spend day after day caring for the needs of people, often neglecting their own personal needs. Many pastors experience what has been termed, "occupation burnout", which has been defined as,

> *"a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Clergy members, who are not only responsible for fulfilling their spiritual responsibilities as the head of their congregations, but who are also frequently called upon for variety of other duties necessary for the well-being of the general public, likely experience higher levels of burnout."* [35]

Burnout is a reality for many pastors. Many pastors serve the needs of the people daily, from early morning until late in the evening and don't take time for themselves to be renewed

[35] Visker, Joseph D., et al. "Ministry-Related Burnout and Stress Coping Mechanisms Among Assemblies of God-Ordained Clergy in Minnesota." *Journal of Religion and Health*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2017: 951–61. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26749271. Accessed 12 Sept. 2023.

and restored. Many pastors also don't take vacations or Sabbaticals where they can spend quality time with their families or time communing with God.

> "*While individual job expectations of clergy members differ by denomination and individual churches, clergy members are typically responsible for the general oversight of all church functions, preaching, providing counseling, acting as a visionary for the church, supervising fiscal management, and much more (Kay 2000). These multiple undefined roles, combined with a lack of standardized working hours, and conflicting expectations between clergy and the congregation may pose a significant amount of stress on clergy members to fulfill all expected and perceived roles*" . [36]

Pastoring Marginalized Communities

We have already determined in the research that many of the communities where students are underperforming academically are Black and brown communities. Pastoring in communities that suffer economically, socially, and politically requires a great deal of awareness and sensitivity. Pastoring in marginalized communities requires that one is plugged into those who live in those communities that continue to be oppressed and exploited. Pastors must be connected to the local school as well as other institutions in the community to understand where the problems exist and how those problems affect their congregants.

Pastors must avoid the danger of being isolated and staying within the four walls of their church, but they must see the entire community as their parish, and shepherd all. Relevant to my research, pastors should know the school superintendent, the local principal and teachers. Many

[36] Ibid, 951–61.

of these individuals may already be members of your churches, so to know them and have a working relationship with them helps in addressing the issues facing Black students within the school. Pastoring demands that you bring hope and healing to every encounter. When parents are frustrated because their child is not performing academically in school the way they think they ought to, it is the role of the pastor to offer consolation as well as strategies to remedy this issue. If you don't have a remedy, find resources and refer the parents and students to an agency that can assist them. Pastors exists to offer hope and healing to the marginalized and messed over.

> "Pastors get to help struggling people respond wisely to their problems, anger needs control, sorrow needs comfort, fear needs rest. Couples in debt need a budget, goals, and financial restraint; teenagers who cut themselves need behavioral strategies to stop; professionals addicted to pain pills need medical attention. Pastors have to tackle problems practically. People need thoughtful advice for real-life struggles."[37]

Addressing social justice issues such as the underperformance of Black students in school is important. Pastors embrace their role as shepherds who are called to care for not only their congregants but also for the entire community.

Change Agent

In light of the social, political, and economic crisis that continues to plague the Black community Black pastors/preachers must view themselves as change agents. They must view

[37] Pierre, Jeremy, Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need*. Crossway, 2015.

themselves not only as called by God to console, comfort, and minister to the emotional and spiritual needs of God's people, but also to challenge systems and structures that have adversely affected the lives of God's people. A change agent can exist in any particular field or sector. In the business world a change agent is defined as,

> "an individual or a group of individuals who take initiative and orchestrate changes within an organization. People who identify the need for the change and take the initial steps for the change process, overseeing it from inception to closure." [38]

Individuals and groups that have a shared goal for the organization can initiate change or transformation within that business. Social agents can exist in any particular field, yet the area that in my opinion where the idea of a change agent was birthed from was within social justice. In light of the consistent oppression and marginalization of certain groups, there is a constant need for change agents. Individuals/groups who are resistant to the status quo and who envision a global community of persons who are empowered and healed.

A change agent sees what is not present and works to create a desired future. They understand the present climate or circumstance as it is and then work to create what envision it to be. What change agents don't do is accept things as they are and perpetuate present conditions. The preacher/pastor within the Black community must be a change agent. The list of social disparities that exist within the Black community is long and exhausting and what is needed are pastors/leaders who are sensitive to the present conditions and work to create more inclusive, healed communities. I believe that Dr. King's concept of the "Beloved Community" is the ideal

[38] https://www.manageengine.com/products/service-desk/it-change-management/change-agent.html

community that a change agent should embrace and work towards. In one of Dr. King's many sermons he talked about living a complete and balanced life, he stated,

> "This is my faith, and I choose to go on through my days with this faith and I tell you if you catch it, you will be able to rise from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope. Love yourself, you are commanded to do that—that is the length of life. Love your neighbor as you love yourself, you are commanded to do that—that's the breadth of life. But never forget that there is a first and even greater commandment, Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart with all thy soul, and with all thy mind—that is the height of life. And when you do this, you'll live the complete life." [39]

Dr. King went further on and said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, "What are you doing for others?" If you are a change agent, you are consistently asking this question, "What are you doing for others?" Dr. King understood this and so as a change agent he worked diligently for diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice. He along with others like him understood that the Christian faith is not simply religious piety, where one focuses one's individual holiness, righteousness and personal salvation. The Christian faith is also about public witness, addressing the needs, concerns and issue the plague the disenfranchised and marginalized. It is about preaching truth to power and resisting structures and systems that continue to oppress and exploit vulnerable groups of people. The change agent must have the concerns of the least on their mind and their heart. Much of the religious culture that exist today

[39] Peters, J. Ross, "An MLK Chapel Reflection: Dr. King's Three Dimensions of a Complete Life." Jrosspeters.com, Jan. 13, 2017.

is overtly focused on personal gain, righteousness, and salvation. If not those, then it is focused on furthering the political agendas of the well off. This is out of sync with the ministry of Jesus that was occupied with, “healing every kind of disease and sickness” (Matt 4:23). The ministry of Jesus was about meeting the needs of the people and challenging the systems that maintained the status quo. The change agent particularly the preacher/pastor/minister must follow in those same footsteps.

> “The minister can aptly be considered a "change-agent," therefore, as he approaches the task of proclaiming the "new humanity." He seeks to minister to men both as individuals and as persons in society. His task is thus bifocal in nature: he is concerned about both the individual and the social condition that produces person-damaging effects. In short, he is concerned about the whole man in the total context of his life.” [40]

This is a vitally important role that the minister must play among vulnerable and marginalized communities. It is even more vital when addressing the topic of this research, education. Education has been and still is an important issue that is in need of change agents to help address the disparities within it. Communities need ministers who are willing to not only critique and challenge the systems in education that perpetuate decades of underperformance of Black children but also create new systems within the community that serve as more productive options for Black children and their parents. Ministers must view themselves as possessing the ability to challenge and change systems. Many of people from our communities have children in

[40] Simmons, Paul D., “The Minister as Change-Agent.” Sage Journals, 68(3) Aug. 1971. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-016-9510-y

public education and need an advocate to not only speak for them but also offer concrete opportunities for their children to advance. As stated in the earlier part of this research the Black church has historically always played a role in challenging systems and creating new paradigms that address the issues in the community. The minister has served not only as the preacher and counselor but also as a change agent, not just in words but also in their actions.

A change agents sees themselves as significant in finding solutions to problems. In light of this research project a someone who is an agent of change seeks to understand system problems within the educational system and discover ways to resolve problems. Offering a problem requires that you confront those within the system who may not want change and who are content with the status quo. Change agents are often viewed as troublemakers by those who are content with the systems and structures as they exist. This should not deter agents of change, it should motivate them because resistance means something needs to be changed. Change agents have vision, as George Barna says,

> "Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances." Vision is more than simply what could be. It's something that must happen. Vision moves you from passive concern to action. It gives you a sense of urgency." "Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances." Vision is more than simply what could be. It's something that must happen. Vision moves you from passive concern to action. It gives you a sense of urgency."[41]

[41] Barna, George, *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Plan for Your Life and Ministry*. Ada, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1992.

Pastors who consider themselves change agents should not limit Barna's definition to their churches only but should also extend this definition to their communities, which include schools with Black students. Agents of change don't limit their vision to their corner or their isolated space, they want change to happen throughout the community. As it relates to this research, change agents should have a vision for what they believe God wants for the community.

An agent of change has an optimistic worldview, in that regardless of the circumstances that are plaguing a community, they are convinced that positive change can take place. This is the outlook and mindset of a change agent, someone who refuses to accept things as they are but works to improve conditions and circumstances for many.

The broken education system in this country and within the state of Oklahoma needs change agents. Individuals and groups who are dissatisfied with Black students year after year underperforming in the school. There is a need for people with vision and clarity regarding their call to challenge the systems that further marginalize Black students and create systems where those same students can be successful. This bifocal approach is needed in vulnerable communities, where on one hand you challenge unfair systems that support the disenfranchisement and miseducation of Black students and on the other hand you create systems to address the same issue.

> "Change agents develop and articulate a need for change; once the change agent is perceived as credible and trustworthy, information exchange takes place; they diagnose client problems; they create an intent for change in the client system; the intent is translated to action."[42]

---

[42] Tann, Jennifer, "The Change Agent in Innovation." Prometheus, 37(1), March 2021: 44-53.

Change agents don't simply analyze the problem within the educational system, but they offer solutions as well as create solutions to resolve those problems.

One example of a minister/educator who was a change agent was Benjamin Elijah Mays who served as the president of Morehouse College from 1940-1967. Throughout his life, Dr. Mays understood the importance of the academy and the parish and its impact on the lives of Black people. During his tenure at Morehouse, he sought to create an environment that produced Black men who were spiritually grounded, socially conscious, and academically insightful. Dr. Mays worked tirelessly to transform Morehouse into an institution that educated and inspired Black men, to go back to their communities upon receiving their degree, and seek to make a difference in whatever field or endeavor they felt called. Mays believed,

> "that an educated man is someone who, "thinks for himself by getting at the root of an issue," who maintains an "open mind," who demonstrates the "courage of his convictions," who cultivates an active impatience with "social and economic injustices," who exhibits "an appreciation for all values and all knowledge," and who displays a sensitivity to the needs of the most vulnerable."[43]

Dr. Mays work as a change agent is evidenced by the students who graduated under his leadership and went forward in the public sector and transformed the world. Dr. Mays produced other change agents which included Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Maynard Jackson (the first Black Mayor of Atlanta), Dr. Louis Sullivan (former Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services), and Dr. David Satcher (16th Surgeon General of the United States). As a

[43] Jensen, Kipton E., "Pedagogical Personalism at Morehead College." Studies in Philosophy and Education, 36(3) March, 2017: 147-165. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-016-9510-y

change agent Dr. Mays embraced his responsibility as minister/educator with the overall goal of impacting the lives of young men.

The example of Dr. Mays as an agent of change is intentional, because he believed that a quality education and deep spiritual connection made an individual more committed to contributing positively towards society. If one could receive a quality education and be deeply rooted in the teachings of Jesus, then that person would not only be able to liberate themselves, but also the community they come from. Upon reflection of this research project, I considered Dr. Mays the quintessential example of a change agent because he stressed the importance of the connection between education and faith. This research project has a similar aim, because of the influence of the Black church and Black minister over the lives of Black people. The Black church has the ability to create an environment that not only helps its constituents lift their faith, it also has the ability (as it has historically done before), to be a place that instructs, tutors and educates Black students to reach their highest potential. In this capacity, the church and its members act as change agents for the community within the area of education.

All three of the ministerial competencies--Preacher, Pastor and Change Agent--are important towards this project. Black students are underperforming in schools and the minister/pastor must embrace the responsibility of these listed competencies in order to address this issue. Education is a social justice issue and it take the minister/pastor to assist the church in understanding its responsibility to be a place that not only lifts the souls of men and women, but also educates minds. Each of those ministerial competencies are necessary in achieving this goal.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodology that was used to gather data, looking at different perspectives on Black students, education, and the Excellence through Exposure Program. The primary goal is to ascertain information from individuals who, from professional and personal experience, offer insight into ways that Black students can be best served to assist them in increasing their academic performance. This also includes a list of questions that were asked to the respondents, focusing specifically on the last four questions. The selected method aims primarily to pinpoint where respondents believe the Black church can best play a role in enhancing the academic performance of Black students.

The Excellence through Exposure Program is designed to introduce Black students to information beyond their regular school curriculum and showcase successful individuals who share their likeness. Respondents were asked several questions regarding their thoughts on the state of education within Oklahoma. Would a program such as the Excellence through Exposure be effective? What are some existing values in the Black Church they think would aid in the academic improvement of Black students? And what additions would they make to the Excellence through Exposure Program? After recording their responses, a revised version of the Excellence through Exposure Program Part II is created. The final part of this chapter is to create a program that can be implemented in the Black Church.

Methods

The method of qualitative interviewing was used for this study to find specific information from the respondents on their opinions regarding the Black Church, Education, Black Students, etc. For this study, qualitative interviewing was the best method since the questions allowed the answers to come from both a professional and personal perspective. What is qualitative interviewing?

> "Qualitative interviews are sometimes called intensive or in-depth interviews. These interviews are considered semi-structured because the researcher has a particular topic for the respondent, but questions are open-ended and may not be asked in the exact same way or order to each respondent. The primary goal of an in-depth interview is to hear what respondents think is important about the topic at hand and to hear it in their own words." [44]

Qualitative interviews are also used,

> "to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, are believed to provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative methods, such as questionnaires. Interviews are, therefore, most appropriate where little is already known about the study phenomenon or where detailed insights are required from individual participants." [45]

---

[44] DeCarlo, Matthew, "Scientific Inquiry in Social Work: Qualitative Interview Techniques." Pressbooks, 2018. https://pressbooks.pub/scientificinquiryinsocialwork/chapter/13-2-qualitative-interview-techniques/

[45] Gill, P., K. Stewart, E. Treasure, B. Chadwick, "Methods of Data Collection in Qualitative Research: Interviews and Focus Groups" British Dental Journal, March 22, 2008: 291-295. https://www.nature.com/articles/bdj.2008.192

Participants

The six participants chosen for this study were:

- Rev. Lee Cooper, Senior Pastor, Prospect Baptist Church Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- Rev. Dawn Bowles, Turnaround Specialist/Founding Principal of Proud to Partner Leadership Charter School.
- Dr. Sharri Coleman, Adjunct Professor/Career Counselor University of Oklahoma.
- Ms. Paulette Hunnicutt, Instructional Coach, Mid-Del Schools.
- Mr. Jay Watley, Chemical Engineer Tinker Airforce Base.
- Rev. Keith Jossell, Associate Minister at Fifth Street Baptist.

These individuals were selected based on their professional and/or personal experience with the Black Church and the Excellence through Exposure Program. Each of them offered responses based on the knowledge regarding education and the impact and influence the Black Church can have on the lives of Black students.

Data

The objective of the questionnaire is to gain insight from each of the respondents on their ideas regarding the value of Black students being taught by someone of the same race as them; what values exist in the Black Church that can used with the Excellence through Exposure Program; what additions could be made to the program to address the gaps that exist in schools that adversely affect Black Students; and do they believe that the Excellence through Exposure Program can be a model used by other Black Churches across the country. Based on the gathered information, the Excellence through Exposure Part II (with the additions) was created

and is included in Chapter 5: Findings. The gathered information intends to take the responses of those interviewed and review the information with the intent to discover their common opinions regarding the value system in the Black Church, and what elements exist in the Black church that can aid students to increase their academic performance.

There were several objectives in using qualitative interviews. They included:

1. Gain insight from the respondents on their opinions regarding the values that exist in the Black Church that can help Black students increase their academic performance.
2. Ascertain if the respondents share similar ideas as to the impact and influence the Black Church can have on Black Students.
3. Discover if Bandura's Theory of Social Learning is applicable in the Black Church context.
4. Gauge whether the respondents viewed the Excellence through Exposure Program as replicable in other Black Churches.
5. Provide suggestions on what denominations, legislatures and community leaders can do to participate in addressing the issue in education facing Black students.

Methodological Limitations

The most significant limitation or restriction is that Black Churches are not the same. Black Churches vary in size, location, membership age, educational background of pastor and members, etc. As a result of these differences, what may exist in one church may not exist in another church. It was discovered during the interviewing process that the importance of education in the church is often connected to the pastor's level of education. Some

denominations require pastors to have a basic level of formal education, which would include college, whereas other denominations have no requirement at all.

Another limitation or restriction is regarding how the public school system operates with religious organizations. For example, in Oklahoma, the connection between the state and religious organizations is more lenient. The state of Oklahoma legislatively is open to having churches and other non-profit religious organizations work with schools to assist marginalized students in improving their academic outcomes. This may not exist in other states that take a hard line in the separation of church and state.

Another limitation is that the Black Church experiences vary from person to person, so the responses of those interviewed are inevitably limited. The responses are only a small sample of the opinions of a select group of people. The opinions of the Black church are varied and a larger pool of individuals interviewed would provide an even greater conclusion to proving the hypothesis of this study.

The topics that were discussed during the interview were surrounding education and the Black Church. Each respondent was asked to answer questions from their own experience and knowledge regarding the specific topics. All respondents were asked the same set of questions and permitted to answer as honestly as they could. Each respondent was able to review the Excellence through Exposure Program Part 1 and then offer their thoughts on the program and suggestions for subjects that could be added to it.

Interview Questions

1. State your age and what city and state do you live in?
2. Do you have children that attend a public school?
3. Overall, how would you rate the public school on a scale of 1-10?

(1 being not good at all, 10 being excellent)

4. Do you attend a predominantly Black church?
5. What role and responsibility do you think the church has as it relates to issue of social justice?
   (By social justice I mean poverty, education, homelessness, and redlining.)
6. What do you expect from your child's school?
7. Do you believe education is a social justice issue?
8. What do you expect from the church?
9. Did your children attend the Excellence through Exposure Conference this past July?
10. Have your children attended any camp, or program that was based out of a church other than the Excellence through Exposure Camp?
11. What is your overall opinion regarding the camp?
12. Do you think Black students exhibit improved academic performance when taught and influenced by individuals who share their appearance and values?
13. Since the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum was created to be used by Black churches, what values do you believe exist in the Black church that would serve as a positive impact on Black students to improve their academic outcomes?
14. After seeing the Excellence through Exposure Program, what other elements in the curriculum need to be added to help the church carry out the program and that Black students get the most out of it?
15. As an instructor or parent who had a child participate in the Excellence through Exposure Program, what are your thoughts on it? Can this program be used and replicated in other Black Churches? If so, how and why?

Plan of Implementation

The goal of using these individuals is to gather information based on their personal and professional experience in education and the Black Church, then include their insight into creating Excellence through Exposure II.

Six people were interviewed during the process:

Rev. Dawn Bowles an Associate Minister at Fifth Street Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, OK. A Turnaround School Specialist at the High School Level who has 20 years of experience in the field of education. She has been a teacher/administrator in schools in Virginia, Alabama, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Rev. Bowles also was a presenter in the Excellence through Exposure Program sponsored by Fifth Street Baptist Church.

Rev. Dawn Bowles, hailing from Petersburg, Virginia, and a product of its Public School System, boasts a rich legacy of 25 years in both education and Gospel ministry. Her educational journey led her through institutions such as Hampton University, Virginia State University, Yale Divinity School, University of Missouri, American Intercontinental University, and Walden University. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Music and Education and a Master's Degree in Education focused on Curriculum and Instruction.

A dedicated advocate for equity and student rights, Rev. Bowles, recognized for her mastery of diverse pedagogical techniques, has excelled as a Director of Bands, bringing her expertise to classrooms and administrative roles from primary to collegiate levels. Emphasizing Social and Emotional Learning, she has transformed the lives of trauma-informed students and families, challenging conventional notions of academic excellence.

Beyond her role as an educator, Rev. Bowles is the visionary behind the Proud to Partner Community in Schools Initiative, earning multiple leadership and community service accolades. Viewing each interaction as a ministry, she remains committed to making a positive impact.

As an Ordained Minister of the Gospel, Rev. Bowles has woven her calling into various roles—Minister of Music, Sunday School and Bible Study teacher, Director of Christian Education, Youth Pastor, Assistant Pastor, and Senior Pastor. Engaging with diverse ministries,

from Nursing Home and Prison to Music, Women's, Children's, Youth, and Young Adult, she embraces her calling as the cornerstone of her life.

Dr. Sharri Coleman is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Oklahoma in the Clara Luper Department of African/African-American Studies. She has more than 20 years of experience in public education, serving as a classroom teacher, counselor, and post-secondary career opportunity specialist. Dr. Coleman also served as Director of the Excellence through Exposure Program at Fifth Street Baptist Church.

Dr. Sharri is a highly sought-after motivational speaker, accomplished author, blogger, professor, and qualified podiatrist. Committed to inspiring young minds, she guides them in recognizing the connection between their inner selves and life's path, urging them to take purposeful steps. Her unique blend of medical expertise, spirituality, and educational insight fosters students' spiritual, mental, and emotional well-being.

Dr. Coleman, originally trained as a podiatrist, transitioned from medicine to education driven by her passion for learning and mentoring. During seven years in the Oklahoma City Public School system, she taught Science and Chemistry. Simultaneously, she embarked on a teaching journey at the University of Oklahoma's Clara Luper African and African American Studies program. Engaging with the community, she served as an internship counselor and later as a school counselor at a local 9th-grade center.

Originally from Edgewater Park, New Jersey, Dr. Coleman graduated from the Philadelphia High School for Girls and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry/Pre-Medicine from Spelman College in 1993. In 1998, she achieved a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM) degree from Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine. A perpetual learner, she aims to

complete her Master of Theological Studies degree from Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in Spring 2024.

Reverend Dr. Lee E. Cooper, Jr., an Oklahoma native, boasts over 35 years of leadership experience in various realms, particularly in the fields of ministry, government, and community engagement. Serving as the Senior Pastor at Prospect Church for more than three decades, he has overseen remarkable developments, including the construction of a state-of-the-art sanctuary and a Youth and Education facility. The church has flourished under his guidance, now boasting a membership of over 1,500 individuals.

In his pastoral role, Dr. Cooper has demonstrated his commitment to education and community welfare. He held the position of president in The Progressive Oklahoma Baptist Convention and contributed to the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma as a member of the Oklahoma Executive Board. His dedication to education is evident through his service on the One Church One Child State Advisory Board from 1989-2002. Remarkably, he has chaired the Oklahoma City Wide Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration for more than 25 years and continues to serve as the Social Action Chairperson of The Concerned Clergy for Spiritual Renewal.

Beyond the walls of the church, Reverend Dr. Cooper has made significant contributions to government and community development. He served on the Oklahoma City Planning Commission for Ward 7, acted as the Chaplain to the Oklahoma State Senate in 1990 and 2021, and presently serves as a Commissioner for the Oklahoma City Urban Renewal Authority. Additionally, he holds the position of Trustee for the Oklahoma City Redevelopment Authority and is the Chairperson of the Oklahoma City Clara Luper Plaza, as well as Treasurer of the Clara Luper Civil Rights Museum and Freedom Center of Oklahoma City.

Dr. Cooper, a Southeast High School public school graduate in Oklahoma City, earned his B.A. from Bishop College in Dallas, Texas, and his Master of Divinity from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. He pursued post-graduate courses at Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Notably, he is a graduate of Leadership Oklahoma City (XXVII) and has received the KRMP Community Servant of the Year Award.

Mrs. Paulette Hunnicutt is an Instructional Coach at Mid-Del Middle School. Before this position, she served as a classroom teacher. Ms. Hunnicutt transitioned from corporate America to teaching in the public education system. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Biology and Chemistry from North Carolina Central University, a Historically Black College and University. Currently pursuing a Master's in Educational Leadership at the University of Central Oklahoma, she anticipates graduating in May 2024. With a background of 15 years in corporate sales and marketing, Hunnicutt moved to a career in education in 2017 with Oklahoma City Public Schools. She has taught seventh-grade Science at Midwest City Middle School since 2020.

Recognized as the Teacher of the Year at Midwest City Middle School and a Top 5 District finalist, Paulette is married to RL, and together, they have four children, all educated in the public school system. Now serving as the instructional coach at the same school her younger sister attended for sixth and seventh grade, Paulette is thrilled to experience this full circle moment in her career.

Rev. Keith Jossell is an Associate Minister at Fifth Street Baptist. He has worked in the field of education for over 30 years in Public Strategies helping people in job training and

placement. He was a facilitator in the Excellence through Exposure Program hosted by Fifth Street Baptist Church.

Rev. Jossell has had extensive involvement in education, he played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of Christian Heritage Academy a Christian private school in Oklahoma City, OK. He has dedicated his time and expertise as a member of the Board of Trustees, contributing significantly to the successful completion of the accreditation process. He has served as an adjunct professor for three years at Odyssey Leadership Academy. At this school, he has focused on values such as identity formation, virtue development, compassion, and the pursuit of wisdom through constructive mentoring relationships leaving an indelible mark on both students and the institution. Following this role, he assumed the position of Dean of Diversity for two years, demonstrating my commitment to promoting inclusivity and fostering an environment that celebrates diversity within the educational community.

Mr. Jay Watley currently serves as the Program Manager for Corrosion Prevention and Control at the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Complex, located at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, OK. With more than 25 years of experience, Mr. Watley is entrusted with providing critical expertise in Corrosion Control within the Department of Defense. He plays a pivotal role in testing, acquiring, and implementing cutting-edge coating removal and application technologies for essential Air Force weapon systems.

Mr. Watley graduated from the Oklahoma City Public School System, completing the Biomedical Program at Northeast High School. Subsequently, He earned a Bachelor of Sciences in Chemical Engineering from the University of Oklahoma.

His responsibilities include overseeing the management, execution, and operation of

Corrosion Prevention and Control programs for the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Complex (OC-ALC).

Jay Watley is a Deacon at Fifth Street Baptist Church and his two daughters participated in the Excellence through Exposure Program hosted by Fifth Street Baptist Church.

Chapter 5: Findings and Interviews

This chapter covers the interviews with six individuals regarding the present state of public education, the impact they believe the Black Church can have, and their responses to the Excellence through Exposure Program. All of the recipients submitted their ideas regarding the Excellence through Exposure Program and how Black churches along with their core values can help increase the academic performance of Black children. All of the respondents agreed that the state of public education in Oklahoma is extremely poor. They also agreed that the Black church can have an impact on the academic performance of Black students in several different ways; mentoring, tutoring, goal setting, discipline, etc. This chapter covers the interviews that were conducted with each respondent and their suggestions on how the Black church can address the issue of the underperformance of Black students.

All of those interviewed bring a level of experiential expertise with them, they all group up in the Black church and either have children in public school or are currently working in a public school. The findings of this research are intended to reveal that when the Black church creates programs that not only assist Black students in reading, writing, and mathematics but also provide a curriculum that exposes them to cultural, financial, and career literacy from individuals within the church that look like them and share common values with them, Black students will increase their academic performance.

During the research process, I interviewed six individuals and asked specific questions regarding their thoughts on the state of public education and the necessity of programs and partnerships within the Black Church. The interviews were scheduled for 20 minutes each and they were conducted virtually through Zoom and then transcribed. There is a physical

manuscript for each interview available. The same questions were asked by each person interviewed and they were permitted to speak as freely as they desired by on their personal and professional experience. These individuals represent a cross-section of parents, educators, ministers, administrators, etc., below are their responses in narrative form.

Question #1

Do you think African-American students exhibit improved academic performance when taught and influenced by individuals who share their appearance and values?

All of the respondents answered that they believed Black students show improved academic performance when taught and/or influenced by individuals who share their appearance and values. All of the respondents were either parents or educators who have had children in the public school system or are educators within the system. They all expressed that their ability to achieve was in part connected to being influenced by individuals who shared the same appearance and possessed similar values. Each individual expressed the idea that having a successful mentor who shares their racial background positively influences Black students during teaching, instruction, and mentoring.

Rev. Dawn Bowles is a Turnaround Specialist who focuses on taking schools performing below state and national levels and helping them improve. Rev. Bowles discussed that her passion for education came from the church she grew up in that was linked to an HBCU Historically Black College and University, Virginia State University. She expressed that the church she grew up in operated programs and partnered with other schools and universities to help Black students achieve academically. Rev. Bowles stated,

> "All the professors attended my church, all the doctors and lawyers, engineers, politicians, everyone attended my church and they looked like me. And so the

platform and the premise for all of us as the youth was just that to introduce us to guide us to lead us to direct us and to make sure we had the proper exposures so we could have choices when we graduated high school. It's hard to trust people sometimes like when the world doesn't look like you. When you are forced to decide without any guidance or direction. But if you can see someone who looks like you, maybe even comes from a community like yours make a decision that has improved their lives and apply them in your school space, you're gonna feel better spiritually, mentally, and academically. They were well-spoken, they dressed well and they worked hard in the church, which led me to believe they worked hard on their job."

Rev. Dr. Lee Cooper has served as the Senior Pastor of the Prospect Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, OK for over 30 years and has two sons and a daughter who have attended Oklahoma City Public Schools. On this issue he stated,

> "You can't be what you never see. And so I think a lot of it is exposure, which part of why we have the Alpha Boys Institute *[The Alpha Boys Institute provides leadership and life skill training for targeted "underperforming" middle school students in metro Oklahoma City. Their goal is to improve high school drop-out and incarceration rates at city schools identified as having the highest need. The Alpha Boys Institute was launched with the mission to significantly improve outcomes for this target population.]* at my church, which is that component of mentoring, particularly making sure that our kids are exposed to Black professionals."

Mrs. Paulette Hunnicutt, an Instructional Coach at Del City Middle School, is married and has three children, shared a similar thought, stating,

> "In the work that I do Black students respond differently when they see someone who looks like them is trying to help them. There is a sense that they believe you understand them, where they came from, what they are going through, and that you possibly can relate to them. That connection makes it a little easier to reach those students."

Rev. Keith Jossell is Senior Manager of Content and Delivery at Public Strategies where he is tasked with planning, developing, and executing curricula development and dissemination strategies. At Public Strategies, he partners with practice-informed solutions for effectively addressing the needs of low-income and/or disadvantaged populations across family-strengthening and employment efforts. He stated,

> "There is something about representation. There is something about being around people who look like you and carry the same burden as you do. People who understand the experience of being Black and young people, help understand the struggles of the young people and also have the experience of history on their side to be able to show them the pathway of how others before them have already achieved what they're striving to achieve."

Dr. Sharri Coleman, who is an educator at the high school and college level, responded,

> "As an adjunct professor at the University of Oklahoma, I understand that my presence is life-changing for some of my students who have never had a Black

> teacher besides a coach. They have told me this on many occasions. I would assume that having that same level of support and cultural relevance would encourage K-12 students as well. During the pandemic, our church partnered with the local Urban League to house a Community Hope Center for up to twenty students. I hired two lead teachers and 4-5 college students, who served as assistant teachers. Everyone who worked in the program was Black, the mental health specialist, the kitchen staff, the teachers, and the support staff. Some of our students attended all-white schools and never experienced a Black teacher, so this was encouraging for both parent and student."

These five shared that when there is someone in authority who looks like a Black student, there is an assumption on the part of the student that the individual can relate to them. This breaks down barriers much faster and makes the ability to connect with Black students much easier.

Question #2

Since the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum was created to be used by Black churches, what values do you believe exist in the Black church that would serve as a positive impact on Black students to improve their academic outcomes?

Each participant believed that certain values inherent in the Black church can significantly impact Black students. The value system of the Black Church has played a crucial role in the survival and advancement of the Black community. Among the values mentioned by respondents within the Black church were social responsibility, accountability, discipline, hard

work, and introspection. All respondents unanimously agreed that the Black Church, given its historical role in elevating the awareness of Black individuals to believe in themselves and their abilities, possesses the potential to exert a similar positive influence on Black students today.

Mr. Jay Watley is the father of two daughters, a chemical engineer, and a deacon in the church. He expressed that for him growing up in the Black church has made a significant positive impact on his own life and is the reason why he placed both of his daughters in the Excellence through Exposure Program. He comments,

> "There are many values that I can state, but the ones that have helped me throughout my life are, hard work, integrity, professionalism. When I grew up in church I saw people who looked like me, who were hard-working people who displayed professionalism every time I saw them at church. They were well-spoken, they dressed well and they worked hard in the church, which led me to believe they worked hard on their job."

Rev. Dr. Lee Cooper, Senior Pastor of the Prospect Baptist Church in Oklahoma City and father of two adult children replied:

> "The Black Church has always taught lessons on hard work, discipline, and achievement. During slavery, Black folk met in the hush harbor and it was there that we learned about hope, faith, and collective responsibility. We in the Black Church believe that for us as a people to overcome the many obstacles that we constantly confront, we stress the values of persistence, determination, and reliability. Other than the home where Black students may or may not be exposed

to those values, the church is the one true place where those values can and should exist."

Paulette Hunnicutt, an educational coach and mother of three children who attend public school, commented:

> "A set of values that I believe the Black church can give Black students are discipline, obedience, and compassion. So many kids come from homes where because their parents work multiple jobs no one is there to check on them to make sure their homework is done or that they are behaving correctly in school. The church can help with that because when a student knows someone is holding them accountable they in my opinion perform better in school. One of the areas that schools do not focus on enough is decision-making. Helping students make good proactive decisions that improve their cognitive abilities."

Dr Sharri Coleman, an Adjunct Professor at the University of Oklahoma and also a College and Career Counselor for a local high school in Oklahoma City, stated:

> "The church that I grew up in helped me discover my purpose and overall goals in life. It exposed me to college and career options and helped me discover who I was as a Black woman and the responsibility I had to do well in school and set an example for other students. Although society has shifted in so many ways some values still exist in that space that can develop and empower students toward success in school and life."

Rev. Keith Jossell expressed that as a result of growing up in a Black church he was able to pick up certain values that helped propel him to the place where he is today, professionally and personally and he still believes those values still exist in many Black churches. He commented:

> "One value that was impressed upon me that could be added to this program is the idea of collective responsibility. Asking the question, How are you giving back? Excellence is not about you becoming excellence alone. Also requires that you then bring three or four or five other people up or that you can impact the community. That he ain't heavy but this is my brother; it's my responsibility."

Rev. Jossell expressed that Black students learning about collective responsibility and how caring for others, showing others respect, and respecting the humanity of all people can translate into a positive academic outcome because they would know that other people are caring for them as they care for others.

> "The Black students would understand that excellence extends beyond yourself and true excellence is when you can help others succeed as well. This is missing in our public schools which focus on individual achievement, that in turn forces Black students to work in isolation when they should be working in community."

When asked if were there any other values he believed exist in the Black church that can be transmitted to Black students through the Excellence through Exposure Program, Jossell stated, "acceptance, validation, community, and belief."

The Black church historically has done well at accepting people who for whatever reason are marginalized and oppressed. Many Black students feel marginalized and oppressed within their school systems. Having teachers and administrators who not only don't know your culture but in some cases misinterpret it can make the Black student feel marginalized and oppressed. The Black church historically has been the place where regardless of your socioeconomic status you were accepted.

Question #3

After seeing the Excellence through Exposure Program, what are your thoughts and what are some other elements in the curriculum that need to be added to help both the church carry out the program and that Black students to get the most out of it?

The respondents agreed affirmatively that the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum covering academic, cultural, career, financial, and spiritual awareness is effective in improving academic outcomes for Black students. They each added that for this curriculum to be used in the Black Church, more emphasis has to be placed on the importance of education within the Black community. They commented that Black pastors must see and embrace that education is a social justice issue. Also, there ought to be a component on social-emotional learning included in the curriculum. Each of them stated that a plan for implementing this curriculum, whether as an afterschool or Saturday program, would be helpful to the church.

Rev. Dawn Bowles stated that based on her observation one component that she would add to the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum would be Social Emotional Learning. She explained,

"Social Emotional learning is needed in education today because it

> focuses on self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and decision-making. For example, if there is a fight at school there would be some kind of accountability system in place, where both parties would share how they made each other feel and then seek to implement some restorative practice to resolve the conflict."

I asked Rev. Bowles how the Black Church assists with the process of Social Emotional Learning using the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum. She replied,

> "Every individual that is over a class, or serves as a mentor should receive some training on how to deal with students within the framework of SEL (Social Emotional Learning). The adult volunteers at the church may be experts in their subjects, but they also need some hands-on training on how to best reach those students."

Dr. Lee Cooper expressed that many Black students should not only be able to learn about Black History but also about local Black achievers. He stated,

> "I would add to the curriculum a component that brought in individuals who are a part of Black History. It is one thing to learn it, it is another thing actually to see a living, breathing person who overcame racial obstacles, yet was successful in spite of it. This could be a game changer for some Black students."

This type of exposure according to Dr. Cooper can aid Black students who see a "disconnect between histories that are on the pages of a book and living history".

Mr. Jay Watley stated that the school his daughters attend and so many other schools, don't offer the ACT and SAT enough to prepare students to properly excel at those exams. He believes that those standard practice tests and classes can be offered in the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum. Mr. Watley expressed,

> "Since some scholarship money is offered based on your ACT or SAT scores, the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum could include a prep course. While learning and being exposed to the other classes it would help Black students prepare to take those standardized tests. I don't know the statistics offhand, but I am sure that many Black students are not receiving the monies for college they should, not because they can't score high on either exam but I believe it is because they are not properly prepared."

Rev. Jossell saw an additional component to the Excellence through Exposure Curriculum would be Social Responsibility. Rev. Jossel, who was an instructor in the program, said that many of the students had never been taught or exposed to the idea that they are connected and are in some ways responsible for each other's success. He stated,

> "Excellence is not about you becoming excellence alone. That you becoming excellent also requires that you then bring three or four or five other people up or that you are being able to impact the community in some kind of way. That makes the community more vibrant. This idea would make the student more responsible not only to themselves but also to their other students, which in turn can improve the academic performance of Black students."

Rev. Bowles stated that in her opinion,

> "Education is a social justice issue at it was In the 20th century, the 19th century, the 18th century, and so on and it has not changed. That has not changed. What has changed is our perspective of it as Black people. That has changed. So the thirst we once had to get an education or even to view education as important has changed. Education is so easily attainable now that it's not something that we see as a challenge or something that we need to go and get even though we don't realize the way we're getting it is not adequate"

Pastor Cooper stated,

> "Many Black churches in Oklahoma City, in my humble opinion, do not view social justice as part of the mandate and mission of the church. As a result, they view the education of Black students as important but more than likely not as a justice issue. To some, the mission of the church is the saving of souls and when an issue arises they seem to get involved. But overall, not when it comes to education."

I asked Dr. Cooper to explain further why he believed that many Black churches in Oklahoma City don't view education as a social justice issue, and he responded,

> "I think some of this problem exists as a result of the lack of education of some of the clergy. Many of our clergy persons are not college or seminary-trained and I believe that has a serious effect on why there is not an emphasis on education as a social justice issue."

Rev. Jossell replied,

> "The idea is that it's my responsibility to pull my sister up. I think that component, I would place in there so that they always understand that their excellence extends beyond themselves. This might not be one class, because it can be the thread that runs through all of the classes."

Dr. Coleman answered the question extensively, stating,

> "First, I would take a survey of the students and the parents before beginning the three-day program. Of course, they would be self-identifying but it would allow program leaders to see how both parents & students think about their academic performance. The three-day camp would only be the beginning. I don't believe that you will receive any real feedback until the student is consistently engaged in a bimonthly program over 3 months. The initial camp would primarily be used to expose the students to what they will receive over the next few months. Then every two weeks, a Saturday or Sunday afternoon enrichment class would allow students to have buy-in and allow them to develop skills and strategies that will carry them throughout the school year and life."

Dr. Coleman further explained that a program such as this can be measured from year to year as to its impact on the students. She said that parental involvement is key to any program if it is to be successful. She expressed that parents along with their students need to understand the expectations of the program and how partnering with the church will help them holistically.

Mrs. Hunnicutt said that many students are not aware of politics and don't think that it should concern them. She said that she would add a component that taught politics past and present and how it will affect the student in the future. She stated,

> "Many of the students that I teach have no idea how the government works. They see politics as something adults complain about all the time. I would add to this curriculum a class on politics and government. These kids need to understand that they will eventually be of age to vote and when they do reach that age it will be important for them to know how government works. I would add a civics/political awareness class to the program."

I asked Mrs. Hunnicutt, "Do you believe the Black church can include this in their program of trying to improve Black student performance?" She replied,

> "What better place than the Black Church that has a history of political and social awareness? The Black church should not just educate the adults on the political issues and concerns but it should also educate the youth."

Question #4

As an instructor or parent who had a child participate in the Excellence through Exposure Program, what are your thoughts on it? Can this program be used and replicated in other Black Churches? If so, how and why?

All six of the respondents agreed that the Excellence through Exposure Program was effective because it empowered and exposed students to different sets of information that they otherwise would not receive in school. Additionally, many of the students attend school with

students of other races and ethnicities, so this program held at a Black church allowed them to be taught by Black educators and exposed to Black professionals. All respondents stated that this program should become a manual for Black churches all across the country to use if they want to aid Black students in improving their academic performance.

Mr. Watley, who had two daughters attend the Excellence through Exposure Program, stated,

> "All of the classes were valuable, but the one class that my daughters talked about was the economic class. Many adults are not exposed to what a credit card is or what it means to have a 401k until they are forced to know these things as adults. Exposing young people to that type of information helps them look beyond where they are and maybe even focus on what they want to do with their lives."

Mr. Watley expressed that many Black students are underexposed, meaning they don't see or hear enough positive messages in their lives. The Excellence through Exposure Program changes that and provides them with people who can speak into their lives positively. He continues,

> "There are so many negative images that Black students are confronted with from social media, peers, teachers, etc. Programs such as EtoE present young people with positive language that can lift them spiritually and mentally. My daughters enjoyed the program's presenters because they taught them things that you don't normally receive in school.

Rev. Bowles, who was a presenter in the program, expressed that the program was and is very much needed in the Black community. She stated,

> "So many of our schools are teaching kids to take tests and not educating them thoroughly, so this program is very much needed. Black churches will have to step up and fill in the gap because there are so many holes in the educational system today. This program, if utilized by Black churches, can fill in those holes. Many students today are not affiliated with any church. Their parents don't attend church, so to have a program such as Excellence through Exposure with a spiritual component provides a positive impact for the students."

Rev. Jossell was a presenter and instructor during the Excellence through Exposure Program and he commented,

> "The camp was great. It should be replicated and used by Black churches all over the country. Many Black students are not performing well because they lack a sense of self-knowledge and self-awareness. This program allows them to see people who look like them, share similar values, and express a care and concern for them."

Rev. Jossell further stated that so many students know nothing about Black history except a few facts that are always taught in school. In his opinion, the Black Church should become the primary place where Black Students can learn exhaustively about Black History. In his words,

> "We [Black people] should not expect other cultures to teach our history for us. The Black Church should see the teaching of our history as a mandate because it does motivate and inspire our Black students to perform well in school."

Dr. Coleman, who was a presenter and co-director of the program, stated,

> "If the purpose of the Exposure through Excellence was meant for young scholars to be exposed to excellence, then the program accomplished that and was effective. The church was able to gather a group of students and introduce them to concepts that might have been unfamiliar to them. At the end of each night, students gathered in the sanctuary and discussed what they learned from each session. It was wonderful to hear the ability of students to differentiate between a debit and a credit card, after attending the finance workshop. Students also mentioned the beauty of their Blackness after attending the "Young, Gifted, and Black" workshop. After listening to a family medicine physician, students were able to recall the various types of medical professionals and learned the necessary steps to work in the medical field. What made the three-night camp especially wonderful was that it was held in a welcoming space, by Black pastors, leaders, educators, and professionals."

Pastor Cooper was not a presenter in the program but he is the pastor of the church that host the Whiz Kids program. He stated,

> "There are good programs many that are ran by predominantly white individuals,

> that can address the issue of low academic performance of Black students, but they lack cultural awareness and connection, so their success is limited. The Excellence through Exposure Program covers more territory in addressing the issues facing Black students. Another reason a program such as this effective is because many of the members of these Black churches already know some of the Black students, which makes it easier in creating a connection with them and their parents."

Ms. Hunnicutt believed the Excellence through Exposure Program operating out of the church would help Black students develop a positive self-image as well as a safe space for them learn and grow. She stated,

> "So many of my students do not live in safe homes, they are exposed to violence, abuse, drugs etc. This is the type of program that would give them a safe place for a few hours a week let their guard down and be valued, loved and cared for by people who look like them, who are successful. Who would not want their child to be in that environment? When Black students see successful Black faces in front of them, it gives them a sense of hope and possibility. So many of our young people are surrounded by negative influences that by the time they get to school they are depressed, frustrated, and often upset. The Black church has the power to help young people see themselves in a more positive light."

Excellence Through Exposure II

E1, the first version of Excellence through Exposure, was offered in August of 2023 as a 3-day Back to School Conference. The original program serves as a launching pad from which E2 will be expanded based on further research and feedback from the six respondents. Based on the respondents' interviews, the revised Excellence through Exposure Program II will include a few additional components:

1. Social Emotional Learning component
2. ACT and SAT Prep, which would fall under College Preparation
3. Adaptable version that would cover a 6-8 week or semester-long after school program
4. Mentoring
5. Self-assessment Surveys for both parents & students: pre- and post-

The Excellence through Exposure Program II would begin with training for volunteers. Per the suggestions by the respondents, the teachers/facilitators would receive training in Social Emotional Learning followed by a session with the director to outline the goals and objectives of the E2 program. After the volunteer training, a meet and greet gathering will be held with volunteers, parents, and students. At this gathering the goals and objective of the program will be covered along with the completion of surveys. Upon the conclusion of the gathering, a motivational speaker would create excitement regarding the program.

With any adaptation of this program that extends past a 3-day conference, the church should begin with one big gathering and meal to kick off the program. The opening of the program will set the tempo for the remainder of the course. The Black church congregants and the Program Director will be the cheerleaders for each student, family, and school administrator who have students involved in the program. It should be explained and understood that this

program is not a school curriculum, but rather a builder of confidence while exposing Black students to Excellence. We believe that the students who participate in this program will perform better in their school curriculum because of this supplemental exposure.

It has already been determined that there are six components to this program: Academic, Cultural, Career, College, Financial, and Spiritual.

Exposure to Excellence II should begin with a parent and child self-assessment survey. Both of these surveys should be kept in a folder, with the student's name on it, along with any other work that will be kept throughout the program.

Parent Self-Assessment Survey

Self-reflection questions assist parents in recognizing their strengths and encourage them to leverage these strengths, while also highlighting areas where adjustments or support may be necessary. **Scale: 1-5, 1 disagree, 3 -agree, 5-strongly agree**

1. I understand my child's educational progress.
2. I communicate with my child's teacher(s) regularly.
3. I am satisfied with the communication received from my child's school.
4. I feel involved in my child's education.
5. I need to be involved in my child’s education for him/her to succeed.
6. I am satisfied with the support provided by the school for my child's unique needs.
7. I am satisfied with the academic progress of my child.
8. I am satisfied with the extra academic resources offered by the school
9. I need support for my child’s learning at home.
10. I am satisfied are you with the level of diversity and inclusion within the school community.
11. I am satisfied with the school's support for student's mental health and well-being.
12. I am satisfied with the school's support for families.

Student Self-assessment Survey

1. What are your favorite/least favorite subjects in school?
2. Which subjects are you struggling with?
3. Which classroom activities do you find more enjoyable?
4. What are your proudest achievements this past year?
5. Have you been taught Black History in school? At home?
6. Do you feel understood and supported at your school?
7. Would you like to have more people around you who care about your success?
8. What would you like to learn from this program?
9. What is your definition of excellence?
10. What is your definition of exposure?

"Excellence through Exposure I"
(The original program)

3-NIGHT BACK TO SCHOOL CONFERENCE
FOR GRADES RISING 5th-12th GRADES
6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

6:30-7:00 Opening Joint Session w/dinner snack (Guest Speakers)
Tuesday - (Medical Professional) "Is there a Doctor in the House?"
Wednesday - Black Entrepreneur/Chef "What Are We Cooking?
Thursday - Attorney "Life of a Lawyer"

7:00-8:00 (2 rotating sessions at 30 minutes each)
Tuesday

- Spiritual Formation *"Who Am I In God?*"
- Academic Exposure & Culture *"It is OK to be Black & Smart!"*

Wednesday

- Cultural Formation *"Young, Gifted and Black"*
- Career Formation *"What skills do I have? "What would I love to do? "What are my dreams and goals?"*

Thursday

- Financial Formation *"The Financial Finish line… #WealthRelay* -
- Etiquette Formation *"Plated for Success"* -

8:00-8:30 Closing Joint Session (Guests Speakers)
Tuesday - NBA Champion
Wednesday - NBA Champion
Thursday - Television Personality

Iterations of Excellence through Exposure II

3-DAY SUMMER CAMP
FOR GRADES RISING 5th-12th GRADES
9 AM-4 PM
This program would follow the example of the 3-day back to school but would afford longer class sessions and time for students to engage with one another, thereby increasing social-emotional learning. The components to be covered are Academic, Cultural, Career, College, Financial, and Spiritual.

6-8 WEEK SATURDAY SCHOOL (one day a week)
FOR GRADES RISING 5th-12th GRADES
2-4 Hours on Saturday
This program would extend over 6-8 weeks and allow for each component to be covered on a Saturday. This would afford more time for facilitators and students to cover subject matter as well as provide time for mentoring. The flexibility of Saturday would also afford the opportunity for field trips related to the designated topic for the day. The components to be covered are Academic, Cultural, Career, College, Financial, and Spiritual.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (one day a week/ Sunday)
FOR GRADES RISING 5th-12th GRADES
45-60 minutes
This program would extend over one yearly quarter and allow for each component to be covered during the normal "Sunday School hour". The components to be covered are Academic, Cultural, Career, College, Financial, and Spiritual. Much of the spiritual component could be incorporated into a "children/youth church", if already offered by the congregation.

To ensure that everyone is committed to the Excellence Through Exposure II program, it is recommended that all participants sign a Commitment Contract to be kept in the individual student's file.

Excellence through Exposure II Commitment Contract

This agreement ("Agreement") is entered into on [Date] between:

Program Director:
[Program Director's Full Name]
[Program Director's Contact Information]

Parent/Guardian:
[Parent/Guardian's Full Name]
[Parent/Guardian's Contact Information]

Student:
[Student's Full Name]
[Student's Age/Grade]

1. Commitment to Regular Attendance:
All parties involved hereby commit to attending Excellence through Exposure II regularly. Regular attendance is essential for the success of the program.

2. Commitment to Excellence:
We all agree to strive for excellence in all aspects of Excellence through Exposure II. This includes active participation, completion of assigned tasks, and maintaining a positive attitude.

3. Communication:
Effective communication is crucial for the success of Excellence through Exposure II. The parties agree to maintain open and transparent communication regarding any concerns, updates, or feedback related to the program.

4. Support:
The parent/guardian agrees to support and encourage the student's participation in Excellence through Exposure II. This includes providing any necessary resources, ensuring a conducive learning environment, and addressing any challenges that may arise.

5. Duration of Commitment:
This commitment is valid for the duration of Excellence through Exposure II. Any changes to this agreement must be discussed and mutually agreed upon by all parties involved.

6. Termination of Agreement:

This agreement may be terminated by any party with written notice provided to the other parties involved. However, termination should be considered as a last resort after all efforts to address concerns have been exhausted.

7. Signatures:
By signing below, the parties acknowledge their commitment to the terms outlined in this agreement.

Program Director's Signature:
_____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature:
_____ Date: _____

Student's Signature (if applicable):
_____ Date: _____

Chapter 6: Summary and Critiques of Study

This chapter will highlight the conclusions based on the research, the overall findings, the limitations of the study, and further research needed regarding this issue. The conclusions reached in this chapter are based on the transcribed one-on-one interviews via Zoom of six selected individuals. Whereas all of the participants found the Excellence through Exposure Program impactful, in their interviews, they suggested, based on their personal and professional experience, additions to the program that would enhance the program and further address the issue of low academic performance of Black students with the assistance of the Black Church. This chapter also highlights the limitations of the study, which included race, geographical location, laws regarding the separation of church and state as well as other issues.

Overall Findings

This research project intended to reveal through qualitative evidence that the Black Church, through programming and partnership, can address the issue of low academic performance of Black Students. Applying Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which proposes that individuals learn from their environment through observation, imitation, and modeling, this study explores how the Black Church, through programming and partnerships, can influence Black students in ways that enhance their academic performance. A study was conducted interviewing six individuals who, in their personal and professional life, have experience in education and the Black Church. Participants were presented with a set of inquiries rooted in their knowledge and experiences related to education, the Black Church, and the Excellence through Exposure Program. Additionally, their input was sought on potential

enhancements and additions to the Excellence through Exposure Programs aligned with the shared values within the Black Church. Subsequently, Excellence through Exposure II was developed, ensuring the program's adaptability to diverse Black Church contexts, as informed by their responses. Those additions to the program are designed to help students in testing and social-emotional learning.

Each participant conveyed that their ability to establish personal goals stemmed from their upbringing in a Black Church environment, where exposure to successful individuals within the church inspired them. Although this study intended to reveal how the Black Church through programming and partnership can assist in addressing the low academic performance of Black students, several critiques need to be mentioned. The objective is achieved when Black Churches participate in programs and partnerships aimed at enhancing the academic performance of Black students. Black students have higher self-esteem and higher levels of academic motivation and performance. There is also improvement in communication skills and decision-making. When Black students are exposed to subject matter concerning Black History, a connection is created that helps improve how they see themselves and translates into academic success. This study is designed to take the feedback of individuals, school teachers administrators, and pastors to create a revised program (Excellence through Exposure II) that can be used by other Black Churches to help them increase the academic performance of Black Students.

Contributions to the Field

The issue of the academic performance of Black students is a social justice issue that must be studied by those in the academy and the Black church. Many Black students are caught in the American public school system, and depending on where they live, they may or may not be receiving all of the resources they need to be successful. This subject contributes to the field because many Black students either attend a Black Church or live near or around a Black church. For Black students to succeed academically the subject of the connection between the Black church and Black students must be studied. The Black church plays a significant role even in today's culture in the lives of Black people, and as a result, this subject matter is important for that reason. There is a significant amount a literature regarding the education of Black students, but very little has been written on the impact the Black church can have on the lives of Black students.

Further research is necessary because, in numerous regions, the Black church remains the sole independently owned institution in the Black community and not subject to federal or state control regarding the information it disseminates. There are several limitations to the research paper. Below are a few examples:

The Black Church

All Black churches are not the same. When I reference the Black church, I am using the term referring to the historical Black church that was birthed during the enslavement of Black people and the Reconstruction era. What we discover when studying the history of the Black church is that at the end of Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction, Black churches began to reflect differences based on several criteria: geographical location of Northern churches vs

Southern Churches, pastoral leadership, white evangelical influence, and other factors. What comes about as a result of these things is the Black church not being a monolithic institution. Some churches emphasized education as the key to further freedom and liberation. Some Black churches saw freedom only through the lens of ascending into heaven after death, still others saw religious purity/holiness as important. The Black Church is diverse, so even though the Excellence through Exposure Program attempts to address the issue of the low academic performance of Black students, each church may use the program differently or not see it as a social justice issue that a specific church wishes to address.

Lastly, it's worth considering the issue of educational levels. While I believe that this project can include elementary school students Prek-3, I focused on 4-12 grade. Noted author and educator Dr Jawanza Kunjufu raises the idea in his work *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* that from grade 1-3 boys in school have a positive feeling about themselves and school. He believes that when they enter 4th grade, "boys are outright cynical about the schooling process and their sense of self has degraded correspondingly."[46] As a result of this cynicism, Black boys underperform in school. Dr. Kunjufu refers to this drop in enthusiasm and academic performance as Fourth Grade Failure Syndrome, the poor transition boys make between the primary and intermediate division. He suggests that it is in 4th grade that there is a disconnect between the school and Black boys. Even though Dr. Kunjufu focuses on Black boys I believe this applies to Black students in general. This study focused on students in the 4th through the 12th grade specifically. Further research can reveal that Black students in grades Prek-3rd grade may need a program similar to the Excellence through Exposure Program that addresses their specific needs.

[46] Kunjufu, Jawanza, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*. Gilbert, AZ: African American Images Pub. 1995.

Church Leadership

Another limitation of this study is that all Black churches are not governed by Black Leadership. Some Black Churches are governed by White leadership. For example, the United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, Church of God, and Episcopalian Churches are led predominantly by White leadership. It has yet to be revealed that predominantly White denominations view the education of Black students as an important issue. Therefore, these denominations might not or could not embrace the Excellence through Exposure Program since it focuses only on Black students.

Separation of Church and State

This study's focus is within the State of Oklahoma and each state is different when it comes to churches partnering with schools. Within the State of Oklahoma, the laws are very flexible when religion involves itself in schools. This is not the case in all states, where many school districts, for fear of losing federal or state funding, will not partner with local churches to do after-school or mentoring programs. Some school districts in the state of Oklahoma are led by superintendents and principals who welcome church involvement in addressing the various needs of Black and brown students. Furthermore, at present, the State superintendent in Oklahoma lobbied to have the state legislature pass a law that allows for religious charter schools to receive federal and state funding. Before this state law was passed, the law read: "Oklahoma's public school system includes both brick-and-mortar and virtual charter schools. State statutory provisions and the state constitution require these schools and all other public schools to remain

open to all students — regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religion, LGBTQ+ status, disability, or any other characteristic — and to teach a non-religious curriculum."[47] As of July 2023, in the State of Oklahoma, religious charter schools will be able to exist and receive state education funding.

No Other Ethnic Group is Studied

Although this study focuses on students' academic underperformance, statistics reveal that Hispanic students underperform academically as well. A more inclusive study would reveal that the majority of Black and Hispanic students have similar numbers when it comes to academic underperformance. This study does not include Asian or Pacific American students.

Urban vs. Suburban Black Students

This study focuses on Black students who attend public schools, which can include students who live in the suburbs. The findings in this research project come from students and churches that are within urban centers. This limits the scope because there are many Black students and Black churches that are in suburban areas. Some studies reveal that Black students who attend suburban public schools face different obstacles than those who attend urban public schools. Black students who attend predominantly white suburban schools experience micro-aggressions and other forms of racial discrimination.

[47] Mach, Daniel and Heather L. Weaver, "A Religious Public Charter School in Oklahoma? Not on Our Watch." ACLU, July 31, 2023. https://www.aclu.org/news/religious-liberty/a-religious-public-charter-school-in-oklahoma-not-on-our-watch.

Suspensions and Expulsions

This study does not look at the impact of suspensions and expulsions on Black students. Black students are suspended and expelled at a significantly higher rate than their white counterparts. These actions of suspension and expulsion directly impact the academic achievement of Black students. One research paper suggests, "a stereotype by teachers that Black students are academically deficient and hostile to the teachers' goals could easily lead teachers to see Black students as "troublemakers" or menaces. With this mindset, teachers may respond more punitively to the conduct of Black students than toward identical behavior by white students."[48] Statistically, "Black children are more likely to be disciplined than their white peers across all ages and all forms of discipline, according to data from the Department of Education for the 2017-18 school year. About 15% of K-12 public school students are Black, but they make up more than 30% of students who are suspended, expelled, or arrested." [49] A separate study would reveal that the school-to-prison pipeline system directly affects the academic performance of Black students.

Over-Emphasis on Sports and Black Students

This study does not analyze how many Black students underperform in schools because of the overemphasis on sports performance over academic performance. Many Black students are praised, adored, and idolized because of their athletic performance, but the same attitude is not given to their academic performance. Many schools push Black students to achieve and bring positive attention to the schools by their athletic prowess and are often ignored when they

[48] Rocque, Michael and Raymond Paternoster, "Understanding the Antecedents of the "School-to-Jail' Link: The Relationship Between Race and School Discipline." The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, vol. 101, no. 2, 2011, 633–65. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23074048. Accessed 14 Sept. 2023.

[49] USA Facts, "Black Students Are More Likely to be Punished Than White Students." USA Facts, March 23, 2023. *https://usafacts.org/articles/Black-students-more-likely-to-be-punished-than-white-students/*.

underperform in the classroom. In some cases, schools and administrators that emphasized athletics helped Black students to increase their academic performance and in other cases Black students underperformed.

Special Education

Another critique of this study is the analysis of Black students who are placed in Special Education. Many Black students are labeled and classified and placed in special education. In most public schools these students are given an (IEP) Individualized Education Program. This is a document of the educational program designed to meet a child's individual needs. My study does not consider these students who may need assistance beyond what the Black church can offer. Then again, the student that is labeled special needs may thrive in an environment that is more in tune with their needs. Either way, many students who are labeled as special needs are done so by administrators, psychologists, and teachers who misunderstand or misinterpret Black student's environment, background, or surroundings.

Future Action Plans

Black Churches

Based on the gathered research the Black Church can use the Excellence through Exposure Program and expand upon its model to address other issues facing the Black Community. This begins with Black churches seeing education as a social justice issue. Having a food pantry and giving clothes away are meaningful and instrumental to assisting the community but churches must also see themselves as an epicenter of social liberation, meeting the needs of all of its constituents. Some of those constituents are Black students who for various reasons are underperforming in the classroom. Far too many churches across the country have limited views of what social justice is and those churches/pastors must become more educated and informed on the different components of social justice. What would it look like if the local minister's association or the concerned clergy organization hosted continuing education classes for pastors where they can be exposed to the different issues under the umbrella of social justice; Environmental Justice, Gender Equality, Education Equity, etc.? With the specific topic of this project, the question must be raised: what if a platform was created that placed educators with pastors to have dialogue regarding how the Black church can participate in helping increase the academic standards of Black students? What if, on a quarterly or bi-yearly basis, school administrators/teachers/pastors, etc., convened and had conversations about student/community progress, and an action plan was created to address issues along with a timeline? This type of project would led by Black pastors/Black churches that are willing to go beyond their feeding and clothing programs. "The Black church must focus on living the commission of compassion while also continuing to preach a message of freedom, justice, equality, and hope for all persons from all walks of life. It cannot become so entangled with a message of riches that it overlooks

the crucial issues of daily life— deteriorating education, unaffordable housing, rising unemployment, marginal healthcare, and several others."[50]

Non-Profit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations do not focus on the same issues, so those who focus on education or even are in the intersection of education, should concerned about the epidemic of the low performance of Black students. Non-profits that focus on Black youth, should seek to partner with Black churches and create programs that address the myriad of issues they face. Those partnerships could include shared space, financial resources, and a host before-school and after-school programs together. Many non-profits and Black churches operate isolated from each other, not realizing that working together can help maximize the possibility of addressing social justice issues. This model has existed before among many Black churches and non-profit organizations. According to the *American Journal of Public Health*, "There is a rich history of the Black Church being used as a partner with public health agencies and medical institutions for community health interventions. Numerous collaborative, community-based interventions involving the Black Church have successfully promoted positive health behaviors by engaging those at the forefront of influence in the community in codeveloping and implementing interventions."[51]

The article continues, "Moreover, the Black Church has been the centerpiece of academic–community research partnerships that integrate jointly created health interventions. It

[50] Harvey, Robert S., "Restoring the Social Justice Identity of the Black Church." Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse 2.02; 2010. http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=162

[51] Brewer, LaPrincess C. and David R. Williams, "We've Come This Far by Faith: The Role of the Black Church in Public Health." Am J Public Health, 109(3) March 2019: 385-386

facilitates community engagement and enhances the cultural relevance and uptake of health initiatives by linking them to religious tenets and contexts."[52]

If this model of partnerships between non-profits and Black churches is effective in addressing the issue of health disparities in the Black community, the same model can be used to address the issue of the low academic performance of Black students. Non-profits can have a significant impact in the educational performance of Black students by partnering with Black churches. Non-profits not only partnered with Black churches to address the issue of mental health but also the COVID-19 crisis. Many Black churches and non–profits partnered with one another and set up clinics, COVID testing, and vaccinations. This effort helped reduce the number of Blacks who died as a result of contracting COVID-19. Once again, if these types of partnerships existed on a large scale between Black churches and non-profits, increased academic performance for Black students could be the outcome.

Policymakers

Many schools/neighborhoods need more proper resources to address the education issues in their community. As a result of this, more funding is needed for schools as well as local communities. Policymakers can make state and federal grants more accessible for non-profit agencies. Many churches have started non-profits out of their churches as a way to receive grants to address social issues in their communities. Policymakers, legislatures, and elected officials can host quarterly sessions bringing together community leaders to discuss education as a policy issue and in what ways, through partnership this issue could be addressed. Education is changed through policy and elected officials seek to find out what the concerns are from parents,

[52] Brewer, "We've Come This Far", 385-386

students, and community members. Legislatures can create think tanks that research problems that exist in education and discover community-based solutions to those problems.

Black Denominational Leaders

Historically, the Black Church in the United States has been composed of seven denominations: the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; the Church of God in Christ; and three National Baptist Conventions, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. Inc., National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., and Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc. Each of these conventions can make education a significant part of the overall platform. Some of the conventions already have during their yearly general convention workshops on social justice issues. But they are often under-attended by many of the participants. The education of Black students should be at the top of the agenda for each of these denominations.

Here are a few things that can be created to universalize the approach for all of the different denominations:

- A manual for all Black churches on how to create a social justice ministry in the local church.
- A national denominational liaison for each convention creates an inter-denominational committee to discuss the problems of education and working solutions.
- This working committee can look at supporting individuals to run for local school boards.
- Host the Secretary of Education at the national conventions.
- Provide educational opportunities for clergy to do continuing education and/or receive degrees.

These are a few suggestions for the largest conventions to aid them in addressing the issue of low academic performance of Black students. Some of the conventions are not in the ecosystem of education and need to be informed at every level. These steps would be the beginning to address these issues.

"Our historic and powerful constituency provided key leadership during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. During these tumultuous times, pastors provided leadership from the pulpit, becoming a catalyst for eradicating injustice and inequality across society. Given the state of public education in our country, Black America needs that same orchestrated guidance to overcome this generation's education crisis." [53]

These denominations have the potential to coalesce together and address this justice issue in the Black community. Some of them already have departments that do justice work, but by working with each other, they can expand their impact. The program/curriculum of this research, Excellence through Exposure, can be a universal program used by all churches to address this issue.

Neighborhood Associations

Many Black churches exist in Black communities and most of those communities have neighborhood associations. Those associations can partner with Black churches to sponsor a block party as a way to celebrate their partnership in assisting Black students' success. Those associations can recruit individuals who live in the same community as the church to volunteer

[53] Blake, Charles E., Kevin Johnson, Floyd Flake, "The Black Church's Role in School Reform." The Root, Oct, 28, 2012.

their time and resources. The potential for success of Black students increases when different stakeholders partner with each other to address the myriad of issues facing certain communities.

Bibliography

Alderman, M. K., *Motivation for Achievement: Possibilities for Teaching and Learning*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013.

Alim, H. Samy, "Hearing What's Not Said and Missing What Is: Black Language in White Public Space." *Intercultural Discourse and Communication: The Essential Readings*, 180-197. New York: Blackwell, 2004

Altschul, I., D. Oyserman, & D. Bybee, D., "Racial-Ethnic Identity in Mid-Adolescence: Content and Change as Predictors of Academic Achievement." Child Development, 77(5), 2006: 1155-1169.

Anderson-Butcher, D., W. S. Newsome & T.M. Ferrari. "Participation in Boys and Girls Clubs and Relationships to Youth Outcomes." Journal of Community Psychology, 31(1), 2003: 39-55.

Anyon, J., *Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education, and a New Social Movement*. New York, New York: Routledge, 2014.

Au, W., & J. Hollar, "Opting Out of the Education Reform Industry." Monthly Review, 67(10), 2016: 29.

Baker, J. A., "Teacher-Student Interaction in Urban At-Risk Classrooms: Differential Behavior, Relationship Quality, and Student Satisfaction With School." The Elementary School Journal, 100(1), 1999: 57-70.

Ballantine, J., & F. M. Hammack, *The Sociology of Education: A Systematic Analysis*. New York, New York: Routledge, 2015.

Ballou, D., & M. G. Springer, "Has NCLB Encouraged Educational Triage? Accountability and the Distribution of Achievement Gains." Education Finance and Policy. 12(1), 2016: 77-106.

Bandura, Albert, "The Explanatory and Predictive Scope of Self-Efficacy Theory." Journal Of Social And Clinical Psychology, 4(3), 1986: 359-373.

------, *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973.

Bandura, Albert, & R. H. Walters, *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Baquedano-López, P., R. A. Alexander & S. J. Hernández, "Equity Issues in Parental and Community Involvement in Schools: What Teacher Educators Need To Know." Review of Research in Education, 37(1), 2013: 149-182.

Barna, George, *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Plan for Your Life and Ministry*. Ada, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1992.

Barrett, B. D., "Faith in the Inner City: The Urban Black Church and Students' Educational Outcomes." Journal of Negro Education, 79(3), 2010: 249-262.

Barnes, S. L., "Black Church Culture and Community Action." Social Forces, 84(2), 2005: 967-994.

Barnes, S. L., & A. S. Wimberly, A. S., *Empowering Black Youth Of Promise: Education And Socialization in the Village-Minded Black Church*. New York, New York: Routledge, 2016.

Baum, H. S., *The Community Approach to School-Community Partnerships: Challenges and Possibilities*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Bean, R. A., K.R. Bush, P.C. McKenry & S.M.Wilson, "The Impact of Parental Support, Behavioral Control, And Psychological Control On the Academic Achievement and Self-Esteem of African American and European American Adolescents." Journal of Adolescent Research, 18(5), 2003: 523-541.

Bell, Derrick, *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice*. New York: Basic Books, 1987.

------, "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma." Harvard Law Review, 93 (3), Jan. 1980: 518-533.

Benito, R., M. À Alegre, and Isaac Gonzàlez-Balletbò, "School Segregation and its effects on Educational Equality and Efficiency in 16 OECD Comprehensive School Systems." Comparative Education Review, 58(1), Feb, 2014:104-134.

Biggs, Shirley A., Lucas O. Musewe & Jean P. Harvey, "Mentoring and Academic Performance of Black and Under-Resourced Urban Middle-Grade Students." Negro Educational Review, 65(1-4), 2014: 64-86.

Billingsley, Andrew and Cleopatra Howard Caldwell., "The Church, the Family, and the School in the African American Community." Journal of Negro Education, 60(3), Summer, 1991: 427-440.

Billingsley, Andrew, & Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez, "The Black Family in the 21st Century and the Church as an Action System: A Macro Perspective." Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 1(2-3), 1998: 31-47.

Bireda, Saba and Robin Chait, "Increasing Teacher Diversity: Strategies to Improve the Teacher Workforce." Washington DC: Center for American Progress. Nov. 2011. Retrieved from http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/11/pdf/chait_diversity.pdf

Blake, Charles E., Kevin Johnson, and Floyd Flake, "The Black Church's Role in School Reform." The Root, Oct, 28, 2012.

Bloomberg, Linda Dale, & M. Volpe, (2008). *Presenting Methodology and Research Approach. Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Roadmap from Beginning to End*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008: 65-93.

Boles, John B. (Ed.), *Masters & Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1988.

Booth, Alan & Judith F. Dunn, *Family-School Links: How Do They Affect Educational Outcomes?* New York, New York: Routledge, 2013: 159.

Bowen, William G., & Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Brayboy, B. M. J., "Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education." The Urban Review, vol. 37 (5), 2005: 425–446.

Brewer, LaPrincess C., and David R. Williams, "We've Come This Far by Faith: The Role of the Black Church in Public Health." Am J Public Health, 109(3) March 2019: 385-386.

Brice, Tanya and Kimberly Hardy, "Introduction: Special Issue on the Black Church and Social Reform." Social Work & Christianity, 42(3), Fall 2015.

Brown, Cynthia and Robert Schwartz, "College Prep For All?" Education Next, 14(3), Summer, 2014: 56-61.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

Carey, Kevin, "Graduation Rate Watch: Making Minority Student Success a Priority." Education Sector. Washington, D.C. April, 2008.

Carter, Ray, "Hofmeister: Oklahoma Schools Failing Black Student." Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Sept. 16, 2021. https://ocpathink.org/post/independent-journalism/hofmeister-oklahoma-schools-failing-black-students

Cazden, Courtney B. and Sarah W. Beck, "Classroom Discourse." Handbook of Discourse Processes, 2003:165-197.

Cayton, Horace R. *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City (Vol. 1).* New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1968.

Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub. L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241.

Clotfelter, Charles T., Helen F. Ladd and Jacob L. Vigdor, "Teacher-Student Matching and the Assessment of Teacher Effectiveness." Journal of Human Resources, 41(4), 2006: 778-820.

Conger, Dylan, "High School Grades, Admissions Policies, and the Gender Gap in College Enrollment." Economics of Education Review, 46, June, 2015:144-147.

------, "Within-School Segregation in an Urban School District." Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 27(3), Autumn, 2005: 225-244.

Cornelius, Janet D., *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.

Creswell, John W., Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches *(4th Ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013.

------, *Qualitative Enquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches (4th Ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd, 2017.

Crotty, Michael, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London: Sage Publications, 1998.

Curry, Jennifer R., "Addressing the spiritual needs of African American students: Implications for School Counselors." The Journal of Negro Education, 79(3), Summer 2010: 405-415.

Dantley, Michael E., "African American Spirituality and Cornel West's Notions of Prophetic Pragmatism: Restructuring Educational Leadership in American Urban Schools." Educational Administrative Quarterly 41(4), Oct. 2005: 651-674.

Darling-Hammond, Linda, Deborah J.Holtzman, Su Jin Gatlin and Julian Vasquez Heilig, "Does Teacher Preparation Matter? Evidence About Teacher Certification, Teach for America, and Teacher Effectiveness." Education Policy Analysis Archives, 13(42), n42, 2005.

DeCarlo, Matthew, "Scientific Inquiry in Social Work: Qualitative Interview Techniques." Pressbooks, 2018. https://pressbooks.pub/scientificinquiryinsocialwork/chapter/13-2-qualitative-interview-techniques/

DeCuir, Jessica T. and Adrienne D. Dixson, A.D. (2004). "So When It Comes Out, They Aren't That Surprised That It Is There: Using Critical Race Theory As a Tool of Analysis of Race and Racism in Education." Educational Researcher 33(26), 2004: 26-31.

Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. 1995: 161.

Dereli, Esra, "Examining the Permanence of Effect of a Social Skills Training Program for the Acquisition of Social Problem-Solving Skills." Social Behavior and Personality 37(10), 2009: 1419-1428.

Deming, David J., Justine S. Hastings, Thomas J. Kane and Douglas O. Staiger, "School Choice, School Quality, and Postsecondary Attainment." The American Economic Review, 104(3), 2014: 991-1013.

Dixson, Adrienne D. and Celia K. Rousseau, "And We Are Still Not Saved: Critical Race Theory in Education Ten Years Later." Race ethnicity and education, 8(1), 2005: 7-27.

Donohue III, John J. and James Heckman, J., "Continuous Versus Episodic Change: The Impact of Civil Rights Policy on the Economic Status of Blacks." National Bureau of Economic Research, (#3894), Nov. 1991.

Douglas, B., C.W. Lewis, A. Douglas, M.E. Scott, & D. Garrison-Wade, "The Impact of White Teachers on the Academic Achievement of Black Students: An Exploratory Qualitative Analysis." The Journal of Educational Foundations, 22(1/2), 2008: 47.

Douglas, Ty-Ron Michael and Craig Peck, 'Education By Any Means Necessary: Peoples of African Descent and Community-Based Pedagogical Spaces." Educational Studies, 49(1), 2013: 67-91.

Dragoset, Lisa, Jaime Thomas, Mariesa Herrmann, John Deke, Susanne James-Burdumy, "Race to the Top: Implementation and Relationship to Student Outcomes." National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. NCEE 2017-4001. Oct. 2016.

Drewry, Henry N. and Humphrey Doermann, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2001: 162

Drezner, Noah D., "The Black Church and Millennial Philanthropy: Influences on College Student Prosocial Behaviors at a Church-Affiliated Black College." Christian Higher Education, 12(5), 2013: 363-382.

Du Bois, W. E. B., *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880.* New York, NY: Free Press, 2013 (reprint of 1935 ed.).

DuFour, Richard and Robert J. Marzano, *Leaders of Learning: How District, School, and Classroom Leaders Improve Student Achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2015.

Duncan, C. B. "Out of the Bitter Sea": *The Black Church and Migration in North America. In The Black Church Studies Reader* by Rex. R. Campbell. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016: 237-244.

Dunbar, Jennifer N. "African-American Males, African-American Female Principals, & The Opportunity Gap." Electronic Theses & Dissertations. 1335, 2015. http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/1335

Epstein, Joyce L., "Ready or not? Preparing Future Educators for School, Family, and Community Partnerships." Teaching Education, 24(2), 2013: 115-118.

------, *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools (2nd ed.).* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2011.

Feng, Li, "Teacher Placement, Mobility, and Occupational Choices After Teaching." Education Economics, 22(1), Jan. 2011: 24-47.

Ferguson, Ann Arnett, *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000.

Filerman, S., "Social Skills And Academic Achievement: Differences Between African American, Caucasian, and Latino Students (Ph.D.)." Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (907208793), 2011.

Florian, Lani, Kristine Black-Hawkins and Martyn Rouse, *Achievement and Inclusion in Schools.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2016.

Floyd-Thomas, Juan M. *Liberating Black Church History: Making it Plain*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014.

Fullan, Michael, *The New Meaning of Educational Change. Fourth Edition*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2007.

Gaines, Robert W., II, "Looking Back, Moving Forward: How The Civil Rights Era Church Can Guide the Modern Black Church in Improving Black Student Achievement." The Journal of Negro Education, 79(3), Summer, 2010: 366-379.

Gardner, Ralph.,III, Gwendolyn Cartledge, Barbara Seidl, M. Lynn Woolsey, Guy S. Schley & Cheryl A. Utley, "Mt. Olivet After-School Program: Peer-Mediated Interventions for At-Risk Students." Remedial and Special Education, 22(1), Jan. 2001: 22-33.

Gathorne-Hardy, J., *The Public School Phenomenon: 597–1977*. New York, NY: Faber & Faber, 2014 (reprint of 1977).

Ghee, Kenneth L., "The Psychological Importance Of Self-Definition And Labeling: Black Verses African American." The Journal of Black Psychology 17(1), 1990: 75-93.

Gillborn, David, "Education Policy As an Act of White Supremacy: Whiteness, Critical Race Theory and Education Reform." Journal of Education Policy, 20(4), 2005: 485-505.

Giles, Mark S. "Howard Thurman, Black Spirituality, and Critical Race Theory in Higher Education." The Journal of Negro Education, 79(3), Summer, 2010: 354-365.

Gill, P., K. Stewart, E. Treasure, B. Chadwick, "Methods of Data Collection in Qualitative Research: Interviews and Focus Groups" British Dental Journal, March 22, 2008: 291-295. https://www.nature.com/articles/bdj.2008.192

Goldring, Ellen and Claire Smrekar, "Magnet Schools: Reform and Race in Urban Education." The Clearing House, 76(1), 2002: 13-15.

Goldhaber, Dan, Lesley Lavery, & Theobald, Roddy, "Uneven Playing Field? Assessing the Teacher Quality Gap Between Advantaged and Disadvantaged Students." Educational Researcher, 44(5), June-July, 2015: 293-307.

Graham, Ginnie, "Salvation Army's ACT Prep Program Expanding to More Sites." Tulsa World, Nov. 11, 2014. Retrieved March 04, 2017, from http://www.tulsaworld.com/newshomepage3/salvation-army-s-act-prep-programexpanding-to-more-sites/article_43d5acf8-b830-5d42-a147-6c1cf04ae4d3.html

Gordon, Derrick M., Derek Iwamoto, Nadia Ward, Randolph Potts, & Elizabeth Boyd, "Mentoring Urban Black Middle-School Male Students: Implications for Academic Achievement." The Journal of Negro Education, 78(3), 2009: 277.

Gordon, Molly F. and Karen S. Louis, "Linking Parent and Community Involvement with Student Achievement: Comparing Principal and Teacher Perceptions of Stakeholder Influence." American Journal of Education, 116(1), 2009: 1–31.

Gorham, Linda Frances, "Relationships Between Children's Participation in the Black Church and Their Academic Development: An Investigation of the Ecocultural, Opportunity to Learn, and Program Quality Dimensions of Church-Based Academic Support Programs." Available from PsycINFO. (621034444; 2005-99002-117). 2005: 165.

Hackett, Ursula, "Offers and Throffers: Education Policy under Obama." *The Obama Presidency and the Politics of Change* by Edward Ashbee and John Dumbrell. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2017, 181-197.

Haines Shana J., A. McCart, A.P.Turnbull, "Family Engagement Within Early Childhood Response to Intervention." *Handbook on Response to Intervention in Early Childhood by Virginia Buysse and Ellen Peisner-Feinberg*. New York, NY: Brookes, 2013: 313-324.

Hale, J.E., "How Schools Shortchange African American Children." Educational Leadership 62(3), 2004: 34-37.

Harper, Shaun R., "Succeeding in the City: A Report from the NewYork City Black and Latino Male High School Achievement Study." Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, 2014.

Harper, Shaun R., & Charles H.F. Davis III, "They (Don't) Care About Education: A Counternarrative on Black Male Students' Responses to Inequitable Schooling." The Journal of Educational Foundations, 26(1/2), 2012: 103

Harris, Alama, "Leading from the Chalkface: An Overview of School Leadership," Leadership, Vol. I, No. 1, Feb. 2005: 73-87.

Harrison-Jones, Lois, "No Child Left Behind and Implications for Black Students." The Journal of Negro Education, Summer 2007: 346-356.

Heilig, Julian Vasquez, & Su Jin Jez, "Teach For America: A review of the evidence. Education Policy Research Unit." Retrieved from http://www.greatlakescenter.org/docs/ Policy_Briefs/Heilig_TeachForAmerica.pdf. 2010: 166

Henderson, Anne T. and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002.

Hendricks, Obery M., *The Politics of Jesus: Discovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 2006.

Hickenlooper, John, "Continuing to Expose and Close Achievement Gaps." Feb. 9, 2012. Retrieved February 27, 2017, from https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/eseaflexibility/resources/close-achievement-gaps.pdf

Hill, N. E., & K. R. Bush, "Relationships Between Parenting Environment and Children's Mental Health Among African American and European American Mothers and Children". Journal of Marriage and the Family, 63(4), 2001: 954-966.

Hopkins, Dwight N., *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 2000.

Howard, Tyrone C., *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2015.

Howard, Tyrone C., & H. Richard Milner, "Teacher Preparation for Urban Schools." *Handbook of Urban Education*, edited by Milner and Kofi Lomotey, 2014: 199-216.

Hope, Meredith O., Shervin Assari, Yasmin Cole-Lewis, & Cleopatra Howard Caldwell, "Religious Social Support, Discrimination, and Psychiatric Disorders Among Black Adolescents." Race and Social Problems, 9(2) June, 2017: 1-13.

Hudson, Sally, "The Dynamic Effects of Teach for America in Hard-to-Staff Schools." 2015. Available: https://web.archive.org/web/20180411134327id_/http://www.economics.illinois.edu/seminars/documents/Hudson.pdf

Hursh, David, "Exacerbating Inequality: The Failed Promise of the No Child Left Behind Act." Race Ethnicity and Education," 10(3), 2007: 295-308.

Jackson, C. Kirabo, Rucker C. Johnson, and Claudia Persico, "The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence From School Finance Reforms." The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 131(1), 2016: 157-218.

Jeffrey, Jilie Roy, *Education For Children of the Poor: A Study of the Origins and Implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.* Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1978.

Jensen, Kipton E., "Pedagogical Personalism at Morehead College" Studies in Philosophy and Education, 36(3) March, 2017: 147-165. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-016-9510-y

Jeynes, W. H., "The Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Urban Secondary School Student Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis." Urban Education, 42(1), 2007: 82-110.

Johnson, Sarah Y. Coprich, "The Role of the Black Church in Family Literacy: A Case Study" (Doctoral dissertation). 1990. Available through ProQuest: https://www.proquest.com/openview/a7829257f42298826386a6f574d957ee/1?cbl=18750&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar&parentSessionId=f2Sp8dS8S1sXd2sZUyhuUqXQjreeTOLBzEPpz4%2F8TK0%3D

Jordan, Diedria Howell, "The Role of the Black Church in Socializing African American Students for School Success: A Collective Case Study Into the Nature of Prophetic Activism." Greensboro, NC: University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Dissertation, 2012. Available on ProQuest: https://www.proquest.com/docview/1284158313?sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses

Karanxha, Zorka, Vonzell Agosto, William R. Black, & Claudius B. Effiom, "School Consolidation and the Politics of School Closure Across Communities." Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 16(3), 2013: 31-46.

Karenga, Maulana, "Black Religion." *Down by the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion*, edited by Larry G. Murphy. 2000: 41.

------ *Introduction to Black Studies (4th Ed.).* Los Angeles, CA: University of Sankore Press. 2010: 168

Karenga, Maulana & Tiamoya Karenga, "The Nguzo Saba and the Black Family: Principles and Practices of Well-Being and Flouring," *Black Families*, edited by Harriette Pipes McAdoo. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007: 7-28.

Katz, Susan J., "Border Crossing: A Black Woman Superintendent Builds Democratic Community in Unfamiliar Territory." Journal of School Leadership, 22(4), June, 2012: 771-788.

Keisch, Deborah M. and Tim Scott, "US Education Reform and the Maintenance of White Supremacy Through Structural Violence." Landscapes of Violence, 3(3), 2015.

Keels, Micere, Julia Burdick-Will and Sara Keene, “The Effects of Gentrification on Neighborhood Public Schools.” City & Community, 12(3), 2013: 238-259.

Kelland, Mark D. “Social Learning Theory and Personality Development.” Nov. 4, 2015. Retrieved March 07, 2017, from https://cnx.org/exports/.../social-learning-theory-andpersonality-development-1.pdf

Kluger, Richard, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*. New York, NY: Vintage, 2004 (reprint of 1975).

Koelsch, Lori E., “Reconceptualizing The Member Check Interview.” International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 12(1), 2013: 168-179.

Kohli, Rita, “Unpacking Internalized Racism: Teachers of Color Striving for Racially Just Classrooms.” Race Ethnicity and Education, 17(3), 2014: 367-387.

Kunjufu, Jawanza, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*. Gilbert, AZ: African American Images Pub., 1995.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria, The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.

------, “Pushing Past the Achievement Gap: An Essay on the Language of Deficit.” The Journal of Negro Education, 76(3), 2007: 316-323.

------, “From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in US Schools.” Educational Researcher, 35(7), 2006: 3-12.

------, “It's Your World, I'm Just Trying to Explain It: Understanding Our Epistemological and Methodological Challenges.” Qualitative Inquiry, 9(1), 2003:5-12.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria and William F. Tate, “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education.” Teachers College Record, 97(1), 1995: 47.

Lawson, Steven F., *Civil Rights Crossroads: Nation, Community, and the Black Freedom Struggle.* Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2015.

Lee, Jaekyung, “Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gap Trends: Reversing the Progress Toward Equity?” Educational Researcher, 31(1), 2002: 3-12.

Leonardo, Zeus, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2007: 143-166.

Lickona, Thomas, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. New York, NY: Bantam, 1992.

Lincoln, C. Eric and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990.

Lipman, Pauline, *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City*. Oxford, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2011.

------, *High Stakes Education: Inequality, Globalization, and Urban School Reform*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2004.

------, "Bringing Out the Best in Them: The Voice of Culturally Relevant Teachers in School Restructuring." Theory into Practice, 34(3), 1994: 202-208.

Lleras, Christy and Claudia Rangel, "Ability Grouping Practices in Elementary School and African American/Hispanic Achievement." American Journal of Education, 115(2), 2008: 279-304.

Longest, Beaufort B. & George A. Huber, "Schools of Public Health and the Health of the Public: Enhancing the Capabilities of Faculty to Be Influential in Policymaking." American Journal of Public Health 100(1), 2010: 49-53.

Lotkowski, Veronica A., Steven B. Robbins, & Richard J. Noeth, "The Role of Academic and Non-Academic Factors in Improving College Retention." ACT Policy Report. American College Testing ACT Inc, 2004. Available: https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/college_retention.pdf

Mach, Daniel and Heather L. Weaver, "A Religious Public Charter School in Oklahoma? Not on Our Watch." ACLU, July 31, 2023. https://www.aclu.org/news/religious-liberty/a-religious-public-charter-school-in-oklahoma-not-on-our-watch.

Mansfield, Katherine Cummings, "How Listening to Student Voices Informs and Strengthens Social Justice Research and Practice." Educational Administration Quarterly, 50(3), 2013: 392-430.

Marrero, Gustavo A. and Juan G. Rodríguez, "Inequality of Opportunity and Growth." Journal of Development Economics, 104, 2013: 107-122.

Marsh, Kris, Cassandra Chaney and Derrick Jones, "The Strengths Of High-Achieving Black High School Students In A Racially Diverse Setting." The Journal of Negro Education, 81(1), Winter 2012: 39-51.

McAdoo, Harriette Pipes, "Religion in African American Families." *Black Families (4th ed.)* edited by H.P. McAdoo. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007: 97-100.

McCann, C., "No Child Left Behind." 2015. Retrieved February 28, 2017, from http://www.edcentral.org/edcyclopedia/no-child-left-behind-overview/

McCarron, Graziella Pagliarulo and Karen Kurotsuchi Inkelas, "The Gap Between Educational Aspirations and Attainment for First-Generation College Students and the Role of Parental Involvement." Journal of College Student Development, 47(5), 2006: 534-549.

McCoy, Dorian L. and Dirk J. Rodricks, "Critical Race Theory in Higher Education: 20 Years of Theoretical and Research Innovations." ASHE Higher Education Report, 41(3), 2015: 1-117.

McCray, Carlos R., Cosette M. Grant, & Floyd D. Beachum, "Pedagogy of Self-Development: The Role the Black Church Can Have on African American Students." The Journal of Negro Education, 79(3), 2010: 233-248,438-439.

McClure, Phyllis & Ruby Martin, "Title I of ESEA: Is It Helping Poor Children?" Washington, DC: Washington Research Project and Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. 1969.

McFarland , J., P. Stark, & J. Cui, "Trends in High School Dropout an Completion Rates in the United States." Oct. 2016. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved January 26, 2017, from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016117rev.pdf.

McIntosh, Reubin L., "From the Sanctuary to the Classroom: The Role of Black Church Partnerships in Supporting the Educational Achievement for African American Students." OSU Dissertation (11222), 2018. https://shareok.org/handle/11244/317663

McLaughlin, Milbrey Wallin, "Evaluation and Reform: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title I." Jan. 1974.

McLaren, Peter, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education (6th Ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2014.

McLeod, Saul, "Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory." Simply Psychology, Oct. 23, 2023. https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html

Meece, Judith L., Eric M. Anderman, & Lynley H. Anderman, "Classroom Goal Structure, Student Motivation, and Academic Achievement." Annual Review of Psychology, 57, Jan. 2006: 487-503.

Mehan, Hugh, *In the Front Door: Creating a College-Going Culture of Learning*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.

Merriam, Sharon B. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Mickelson, Roslyn Aarlin and Damien Heath, "The Effects of Segregation on African American High School Seniors' Academic Achievement." Journal of Negro Education, 68(4) Autumn 1999: 566-586.

Middleton, John A., "A Role for the African American Church in Urban School Reform." Urban Education, 36(3), 2001: 426-437.

Mitchell, Henry H., *Black Preaching*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1979.

Mitchell, Roland W., "Commentary: The African American Church, Education and Self Determination." The Journal of Negro Education, 79(3), Summer 2010: 202-204, 439.

National Education Policy Center. "Reviews of the Obama Administration's Six Research Summaries for 'A Blueprint for Reform.'" 2010. Retrieved from http://nepc.colorado.edu/reviews-obama-administrations-six-research-summaries.

National Park Service, "African American and Education During Reconstruction: The Tolson's Chapel Schools." https://www.nps.gov/articles/african-americans-and-education-during-reconstruction-the-tolson-s-chapel-schools.htm

National School Board Association, "Black Students in The Condition of Education 2020." May 2020. https://www.nsba.org/-/media/NSBA/File/CPE-Black-Students-2020-Report-FINAL.pdf

Nelsen, Hart M. and Anne Kusener Nelsen, *Black Church in the Sixties.* Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2015 (reissue of 1975).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, P.L. 107-110, 20 U.S.C. § 6319; 2002.

Oakes, Jeannie, Martin Lipton, Lauren Anderson, & Jamy Stillman, *Teaching to Change the World (5th Ed.).* New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.

Onosko, Joe, "Race to the Top Leaves Children and Future Citizens Behind: The Devastating Effects of Centralization, Standardization, and High Stakes Accountability." Democracy and Education, 19(2), 2011.

Orfield, Gary and Susan E. Eaton, *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education*. New York, NY: The New Press, 1996.

Patton, Michael Quinn, "Enhancing the Quality and Credibility of Qualitative Analysis." Health Services Research, 34(5 Pt 2), 1999: 1189-1208.

Peele-Eady, Tryphenia B., "Constructing Membership Identity Through Language and Social Interaction: The Case of African American Children at Faith Missionary Baptist Church." Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 42(1), March, 2011: 54-75. 173

Perry, Andre M., "For Better Student Outcomes, Hire More Black Teachers." The Hechinger Report, Oct 15, 2019. https://hechingerreport.org/for-better-student-outcomes-hire-more-black-teachers/

Petrilli, Michael J., David Griffith, Brandon L. Wright & Audrey Kim, "High Stakes for High Achievers: State Accountability in the Age of ESSA." Thomas B. Fordham Institute, August, 2016.

Pierre, Jeremy and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

Placenti, Phillip M. (2012). "'God Has My Back': The Role of Faith-Based Institutions in Preparing African-American Students for College Success." (Ed.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Southern California.) 2012. Available from ProQuest.

Poole, Thomas G. "The Role of the Church in Black Education. Western Journal of Black Studies," 12(3), 1988:135-141. Available from Dissertations & Theses Full Text, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Powell, W. S., "The Black Church and Educational Outcomes for African Americans." (M.A.). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. 304834417; 2008..

Quaye, Stephen John & Shaun R. Harper, *Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theoretical Perspectives and Practical Approaches for Diverse Populations (3rd Ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2019.

Raboteau, Albert J., *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Rancifer, Jesse L., "Restructuring Teacher Education: Effective Strategies to Increase the Number of Black Students in Education Program." Association of Teacher Educators. Washington, DC. 1991.

Ravitch, Diane, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2016.

Robinson, J. W. “The Church as a Means of Increasing African American Parental Educational Involvement.” (Ed.D.). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. 304655791; 2008.

Robinson, L. “Education Does Matter: Black Leaders Need to Be Challenged to Help Save African-American Students.” 2002. Recorder Retrieved From http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.osutulsa.okstate.edu/docview/367742053?accountid=3320

Robson, Nate, “Kicked from School: Minorities in Special Ed.” Oklahoma Watch, Oct. 28, 2019. https://oklahomawatch.org/2015/10/29/kicked-from-school-minorities-in-special-ed

Rodriguez, J. M. “Clergy, Schools Add To Efforts: Outreach, Help Of Parents Noted As Keys To Goals.” Oct. 7, 2007. McClatchy-Tribune Business News Retrieved From http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.osutulsa.okstate.edu/docview/464053956?accountid=3320

Roehlkepartain, Eugene C., *A Practical Guide for Developing Agency/School Partnerships for Service-Learning*. Washington, DC: Points of Light Foundation, 1995.

Ronfeldt, Matthew, Susanna Loeb & James Wyckoff, “How Teacher Turnover Harms Student Achievement.” American Educational Research Journal, 50(1), 2013: 4-36.

Peters, J. Ross, “An MLK Chapel Reflection: Dr. King’s Three Dimensions of a Complete Life.” Jrosspeters.com, Jan. 13, 2017. https://jrosspeters.com/2017/01/13/an-mlk-chapel-reflection-dr-kings-three-dimensions-of-a-complete-life/

Rowley, Stephanie J., Margaret R. Burchinal, Joanne E. Roberts & Susan A. Zeisel, “Racial Identity, Social Context, and Race-Related Social Cognition in African Americans During Middle Childhood.” Developmental Psychology, 44(6), 2008: 1537-1546.

Rubin, R. H., A. Billingsley & C.H. Caldwell, “The Role of the Black Church in Working with Black Adolescents.” Adolescence, 29(114), 1994: 251-66.

Russell, Jennifer Lin, Julie Meredith, Joshua Childs, Mary Kay Stein & Deanna Weber Prine, “Designing Inter-Organizational Networks to Implement Education Reform: An Analysis of State Race to the Top Applications.” Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 37(1), 2015: 92-112.

Sadovnik, Alan R. & Ryan Coughlan, ed. *Sociology of Education: A Critical Reader*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016

Saldaña, Johnny, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (3rd Ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2015.

Saltman, Kenneth J., *Failure of Corporate School Reform*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.

Sanders, John & John Rose-Adams, "Black and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment: A Survey of Research and Exploration of the Importance of Teacher and Student Expectations." Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 16(2), 2014: 5-27.

Sanders, Mavis G., "The Effects of School, Family, and Community Support on the Academic Achievement of African American Adolescents." Urban Education, 33(3), 1998: 385-409

------, "Principal Leadership for School, Family, and Community Partnerships: The Role of a Systems Approach to Reform Implementation." American Journal of Education, 120(2), 2014: 233-255.

Sanders, Mavis G. & A. Harvey, "Beyond the School Walls: A Case Study of Principal Leadership for School-Community Collaboration." Teachers College Record, 104(7), 2002: 1345-1368.

Sanderse, Wouter, "The Meaning of Role Modelling in Moral and Character Education." Journal of Moral Education, 42(1), 2013: 28-42.

Saporito, Salvatore, "Private Choices, Public Consequences: Magnet School Choice and Segregation by Race and Poverty." Social Problems, 50(2), May, 2003: 181-203.

Scales, Alice M., "Perceptions of One After-School Tutorial Program." Journal of Research & Development in Education, 30(3), 1997: 167-182.

Shapiro, Joan Poliner P. & Jacqueline A. Stefkovich, *Ethical Leadership And Decision-Making In Education: Applying Theoretical Perspectives To Complex Dilemmas*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016

Shapiro, Thomas M., *The Hidden Cost Of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2004.

Sianjina, Rayton R. & Richard Phillips, "African Americans' Participation in a Comprehensive Intervention College Prep Program." The Educational Forum, 78(2) April, 2014: 98-111.

Simmons, Paul D., "The Minister as Change-Agent." Sage Journals, 68(3) Aug. 1971. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-016-9510-y

Simon, Nicole S. and Susan Moore Johnson, "Teacher Turnover in High-Poverty Schools: What We Know and Can Do. Teachers College Record, 117(3), 2015: 1-36.

Simpson, Richard L., Paul G. Lacava & Patricia Sampson Graner, "The No Child Left Behind Act: Challenges and Implications." Intervention in School and Clinic, 40(2), 2004: 67-75.

Slater, G. B., "Education as Recovery: Neoliberalism, School Reform, and the Politics of Crisis." Journal of Education Policy, 30(1), 2015: 1-20.

Slaughter, Diana T. & Gerald A. McWorter, "Social Origins and Early Features of the Scientific Study Of Black American Families And Children." Chapter in *Beginnings: The Social and Affective Development of Black Children.* Ed. M.B. Spencer. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaun Associates, 1985: 5-18.

Sleeter, C. E., "Critical Race Theory and Education." Chapter in *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education*. Ed. James A. Banks. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2012: 491-95.

Steele, Claude M. "Race and the Schooling of Black Americans." The Atlantic Monthly, 269(4), April, 1992: 68-78.

Steinberg, L., S.M. Dornbusch & B.B. Brown, "Ethnic Differences in Adolescent Achievement: An Ecological Perspective." American Psychologist, 47, 1992: 723-729.

Stuckey, S., *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Sudarkasa, Niara, "African American Families and Family Values." In H. P. McAdoo (Ed.), *Black Families (3rd ed*.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 1997: 9-40.

Summers Jean Ann, L. Hoffman, Janet Marquis, Denise J. Poston, L.L. Nelson, "Measuring the Quality of Family-Professional Partnerships in Special Education Services." Exceptional Children, 72, 2005: 65-81

Summers Jean Ann, Janet Marquis, Hasheem Mannan, Ann P.Turnbull, Kandace Fleming, Denise J. Poston, Mian Wang, Kevin Kupzyk. "Relationship Of Perceived Adequacy Of Services, Family-Professional Partnerships, and Family Quality of Life in Early Childhood Service Programmes." International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 54(3), 2007: 319-338. doi:10.1080/10349120701488848

Tann, Jennifer, "The Change Agent in Innovation." Prometheus; Abingdon 37(1), March 2021: 44-53.

Taylor, E., D. Gillborn & G. Ladson-Billings, G. (Eds.), *Foundations of Critical Race Theory In Education.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

Taylor, R., L. Chatters, A. Woodward & E. Brown, E., "Racial and Ethnic Differences in Extended Family, Friendship, Fictive Kin, and Congregational Informal Support Networks." Family Relations, 62(4), 2013: 609-624.

Taylor, R. J., K. D. Lincoln L.M. Chatters, "Supportive Relationships With Church Members Among African Americans." Family Relations, 54(4), 2005: 501-511.

TeachThought Staff, "Bandura's 4 Principles of Social Learning." TeachThought, Jan.14, 2022. https://www.teachthought.com/learning/principles-of-social-learning-theory/

Thomas, Janet Y., & Kevin P. Brady, "The Elementary and Secondary Education Act at 40: Equity, Accountability, and the Evolving Federal Role in Public Education." Review of Research in Education, 29(1), 2005: 51-67.

Timmermans, Steven & Rhae-Ann Booker, "College-Church Partnerships and Pre-College Programs: College Entry and Urban At-Risk Youth." Christian Higher Education, 5(2), 2006: 99-113.

Turnbull Ann, H. Turnbull, Elizabeth Erwin, Leslie Soodak, Karrie Shogren, *Families, Professionals, and Exceptionality: Positive Outcomes Through Partnerships and Trust (7th Ed.).* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2015.

United States Census Bureau, "National Population Census Estimates." July 1, 2016. Retrieved January 26, 2017, from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045216/00

U.S. Department of Education, "Obama Administration's Education Reform Plan Emphasizes Flexibility, Resources And Accountability For Results." 2010 Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/obama-administrations-education- reform-planemphasizes-flexibility-resources.

U.S. Department of Education, "Race to the Top Executive Summary." 2009. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf

USA Facts Team, "Black Students Are More Likely to be Punished Than White Students." USA Facts, March 23, 2023. *https://usafacts.org/articles/Black-students-more-likely-to-be-punished-than-white-students/*

Vaught, S. E., & A. E. Castagno, "'I Don't Think I'm a Racist': Critical Race Theory, Teacher Attitudes, and Structural Racism." Race Ethnicity and Education, 11(2), 2008: 95-113.

Vora, E., & J.A. Vora, "Undoing Racism in America: Help from the Black Church." Journal of Black Studies, 32(4), 2002: 389-404.

Wagner, Tony, *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need and What We Can Do About It*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014.

Walrond, Michael A., *Searching for Agabus: Embracing Authenticity and Finding Your Way to You*. Minneapolis, MN: Broadleaf Books, 2023.

Ward, S. C., C. Bagley, J. Lumby, P. Woods, T. Hamilton, & A. Roberts, "School Leadership for Equity: Lessons from the Literature." International Journal of Inclusive Education, 19(4), 2015: 333-346.

Webb, N. M., "Peer Interaction and Learning in Small Groups." International Journal of Educational Research, 13(1), 1989: 21-39.

Weiss, Elaine, "Mismatches in Race to the Top Limit Education Improvement." The Education Digest, 79(5), 2014: 60.

Wenger, Etienne, *Communities Of Practice: Learning, Meaning, And Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

White-Frazier, N. D. "Perception Of Church Members Towards Partnership Between Community-Based Education Programs and Black Churches: A Descriptive Study." (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1994). Dissertation Abstracts International, *55-09A*, 2952.

Wiggan, Greg, Lakia Scott, Marcia Watson & Richard Reynolds, *Unshackled: Education for Freedom, Student Achievement, and Personal Emancipation*. Boston, MA: Brill Academic, 2014: 71-83.

Williams, Amy, "The Nine Worst Schools in Oklahoma City Today." Moms Who Think, Aug. 15, 2023. https://www.momswhothink.com/the-worst-schools-in-oklahoma-city-today/

Williams, Hyveth, "Preaching Social Justice." Faculty Publications. 4173, Fall 2021.

Williams, J. M., & J. Bryan, "Overcoming Adversity: High-Achieving African American Youth's Perspectives on Educational Resilience." Journal of Counseling & Development, 91(3), 2013: 291-300.

Williams, D. M., "Perceptions of African American Students on the Role the Black Church Plays on Their Academic Achievement." (Ed.D.). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. 1746624239, 2015.

Wilmore, G. S., *Black Religion And Black Radicalism: An Interpretation Of The Religious History of African Americans*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.

Wilson, E. K., "Gentrification and Urban Public School Reforms: The Interest Divergence Dilemma." West Virginia Law Review, 118(2), 2015: 1-57.

Yin, Robert K., *Qualitative Research From Start To Finish*. New York NY: Guilford Publications, 2015.

------, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications 2013.

Zirkel, Sabrina & Nancy Cantor, "50 Years After Brown v. Board of Education: The Promise and Challenge Of Multicultural Education." Journal of Social Issues, 60(1), 2004: 1-15.